PN-ACA-838

Participant Training Program in Europe (PTPE)
Preliminary Report
Students Exiting Short-Term Training Programs Programmed by PIET

December, 1993

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Contract Number: EUR-0045-C-00-3027-00

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Preliminary Report
Students Exiting Short-Term Training Programs
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This report is a preliminary, limited assessment of the training programs, satisfaction levels, and quality of training provided to short-term participants from central and eastern Europe programmed by the Partners for International Education and Training (PIET), under USAID's Europe Bureau Participant Training Program. This report examines the Exit Questionnaires of fifteen participants upon program completion, and compiles, quantifies, and analyzes their observations and opinions. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made for improvement of the program.

Survey Instrument

At the completion of their U.S. training programs, all Europe participant training program students are surveyed regarding the programs in the general areas of: Predeparture Orientation, Logistics and Support Services in the U.S., English Language, Satisfaction with the U.S. Training Program and Internships, Understanding of the U.S., and General Appraisal of the Program and Recommendations.

Exit Questionnaires are mailed to students at their respective training institutions just prior to the completion of their U.S. training programs. Students complete the Exit Questionnaires and return them to Aguirre International in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Upon receipt of the questionnaires, Aguirre International codes and data enters the information into the Europe Information System (EURIS) database.

Participant Profile

Between August 16 and November 18, 1993, fifteen Exit Questionnaires were received from eight men and seven women who completed short-term participant training programs under the PIET Buy-in Contract with the Europe Bureau Participant Training Program. These participants were from the countries of Poland (5), Lithuania (4), Albania (2), Macedonia (2), Latvia (1), and the Slovak Republic (1), representing seven percent of the 205 PIET students who have completed training as of December 1, 1993.

The exiting participants studied in the following general fields of training: World Banking and Finance (3), Banking and Finance (2), Tax Administration (2), and one each in Auditing, Business Technology, Construction and Analysis of Price Indices, Education Management, Financial Engineering/Risk Management, Legal Issues of Education Reform, Personnel Management, and Public Administration.

Respondents to the questionnaires attended training programs at the following organizations and training institutions from periods ranging from four weeks to six months: Economics Institute - Boulder, Colorado (5); the Institute for Tax Administration - Los Angeles, California (2); and one each at AMA - Charlotte, North Carolina; REFCO, Inc. - Chicago, Illinois; International Business

Technologies - McLean, Virginia; the General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C.; the University of Connecticut - West Hartford; Legislative Offices - Jackson, Mississippi; the Maxwell School - Syracuse, New York; and the Bureau of Labor Statistics - Washington, D.C.

Orientation

Ten of the fifteen participants reported receiving an orientation prior to leaving their home country; five respondees said that they did not receive a predeparture orientation. The length of these in-country orientations was reportedly from one hour to one day.

Twelve of the fifteen participants reported that they received an orientation upon their arrival in the U.S.; three respondees said that they did not receive an in-U.S. orientation. The length of these U.S. orientations was reportedly from one to two days; two said that their orientations were written, and one reported receiving his orientation by telephone.

Preparation for Training

The participants were asked to respond regarding their satisfaction with their preparation for training in several different areas. Overall, the participants were satisfied or very satisfied with many aspects of their orientation and preparation (see Table 1).

Table 1 Participant Satisfaction With Orientations and Preparation

Orientation Topic	Satisfied/Very Satisfied	Number of Respondents
USAID Program Objectives	86%	14
Training Objectives	86%	14
Course Content	61%	14
Travel/Flight Schedules	93%	15
Advance Notice of Travel	93%	15
Stipends and Allowances	87%	15
Medical Insurance	100%	15
USAID Policies/Regulations	67%	15
U.S. Culture	67%	15
Cultural/Personal Preparation	53%	15
U.S. Political/Economic Institutions	60%	15
U.S. Educational System	40%	15

The areas of information on the U.S. educational system (40%), cultural/personal preparation (53%), U.S. political and economic institutions (60%), and course content (61%) received the lowest rating by participants. Overall, however, when they left their home countries, 93 percent of the respondents (14) felt "prepared" (80%) or "very prepared" (13%) for their training experience; one participant felt that he was "somewhat prepared".

When asked what other information would have been useful to prepare them for their U.S. experience, six participants responded: more information about secondary education in the U.S. (2); surprised at the short-term of visa validity (would have liked to do more U.S. travel with own funds); more information on course readings; understanding of abbreviations used by Americans; more about the U.S. banking system and social security system (2).

Program Planning

The participants were asked to give their appraisal of the amount and nature of their participation in planning their training programs. Two-thirds of the participants (10) said that they were involved in the planning of their program. Of this number, 80 percent were either "satisfied" (40%) or "very satisfied" (40%) with their opportunities for involvement. Two participants (20%) were "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied." Twelve of the participants (80%) reported that their scholarship was initiated, promoted, or encouraged by their employer, but only five said that their employer was involved to any extent in the planning of their programs.

When asked if their training program was designed around their particular needs or interests, 53 percent responded "completely"; 27 percent said "a lot", and 20 percent said "partially". They were also asked if the training program was specifically designed to meet the personnel or skill needs of their employers. Forty-seven percent responded "completely"; 13 percent responded "a lot"; 27 percent responded "partially", and 13 said "a little" or "not at all."

Logistical and Support Services in the U.S.

Participants were asked to rate how satisfied they were with various aspects of the support they received during their U.S. training program. Table 2 indicates their various levels of satisfaction with their support.

Table 2 Satisfaction With Logistics and Support Services						
Support Service	**Very Dissatis.**	**Dissatis.**	**Undecided**	**Satisfied**	**Very Satisfied**	**Not Included**
Training Facilities			7%	7%	57%	29%
Housing			13%	47%	40%	
Local Trans-portation		7%	7%	26%	53%	7%
Stipend Amount			7%	47%	47%	
Stipend Timeliness			7%	40%	53%	
Medical Care	8%		15%	23%	15%	39%
Medical Insurance	8%		23%	15%	23%	31%
Problem Resolution				33%	40%	27%

Overall, the satisfaction levels with the logistical and support services seem within reasonable ranges. The greatest number of dissatisfactions were recorded with Medical Care, Medical Insurance, and Local Transportation, respectively.

When asked to what extent they encountered any social or cultural adjustment problems, twelve respondents said that they had no problems, and three said that they had some problems. The only participant responding to an open-ended question on the topic said that he encountered an unpleasant staff and poor service at a Boston hotel and, as a result, had to change hotels.

English Language

Twelve participants stated that they did not receive any English Language Training (ELT) as part of their program. One reported that he received ELT in his own country, and two received ELT in the U.S. Table 3 shows the extent to which students had difficulties with English.

Table 3 How often did you have difficulties with English?					
Areas of Training	**Never**	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**	**Very Frequently**	**Not Applicable**
Lectures	53%	33%	7%		7%
Reading Assignments	53%	33%	7%		7%
Writing	53%	20%	7%		20%
Class Discussions	46%	40%	7%		7%
Oral Reports	40%	33%	7%		20%

Students were asked if language problems substantially limited their ability to learn or contribute in class. Of fourteen participants responding to the question, eight said "no", and seven said that they had no language difficulties, whatsoever.

When participants were asked if they had problems communicating in English outside of the classroom, ten said "never"; three said "occasionally"; and one said "frequently."

Satisfaction With the U.S. Training Program

The participants were asked to rate several aspects of the training they received at U.S. training institutions or through U.S. organizations.

Table 4 Satisfaction With the Training Institution/Organization						
Aspects of Training	**Very Dissatis.**	**Dissatis.**	**Undecided**	**Satisfied**	**Very Satisfied**	**Not Applic.**
Quality of Instruction				62%	31%	7%
Preparedness of Institution				62%	31%	7%
Course Content			15%	39%	39%	7%
Field Trips				31%	31%	38%
Computers Equipment			8%	23%	23%	46%
Consultations with Instructors			8%	46%	38%	8%

For the most part, the ratings of these participants in short-term programs are very good. There were no expressions of dissatisfaction, and only minimal indecision about the rating of Course Content, Computers and Equipment, and Consultations with Instructors.

Internships

Two participants identified portions of their training programs as internships. An Albanian trainee was very satisfied with her four-day internship at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Chicago. A Polish trainee was dissatisfied with his two and one-half weeks at International Business Technologies (IBT) in McLean, Virginia. His dissatisfactions resulted from IBT setting up meetings for him which did not correspond to his program and then being unable or unwilling to correct them. He was critical of PIET, which also arranged visitations for him, for having "preconceived ideas which rendered some of the requested meetings impossible."

Training Objectives

All of the participants were able to articulate the objectives of their training program. When asked if they were able to achieve their objectives, 53 percent said "completely"; 20 percent said "to a great extent", and 27 percent said "partially." Most did not give reasons for only partially achieving their objectives, but some cited the following reasons: not enough time; second half of the program was devoted almost entirely to central bankers and policymakers; too many different programs (11 programs), each one only 15-18 hours; lack of access to good library facilities; and insufficient on-the-job training than was expected.

Some of the unanticipated skills gained that were not expected included: using the computer as an audit tool and how to conduct a performance audit; cost-effective analysis and skills in using PCs; the more analytical approach of U.S. professors helped to change old ways of thinking; learning how to deal with economics in transition; and computer skills.

Group Training

Five of the fifteen participants reported that they participated in group training programs in which a substantial part of the regular classroom instruction was designed for Eastern European scholars. All of the participants receiving group training were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their group training program.

Students pointed out some of the advantages of the group training: the opportunities to learn about and better understand how others are implementing changes in their countries; the exchange of thoughts and experiences made it easier to clarify some topics; and the interesting discussions during the lectures. The only disadvantage cited was that the program was too general and not specifically attuned to the participant's line of work. One "satisfied" scholar pointed out that he was the only scholar from Eastern Europe in a class of Western Europeans and Asians; he felt that he was behind the Western Europeans, but ahead of the Asians.

Characterization of the Training

Eighty percent of the respondents (12) felt that the training was at "about the right level" of instruction. Two students felt that it was "too difficult"; and one thought that it was "too easy."

Eighty percent of the respondents felt that the length of their training program was "about right," while 20 percent characterized it as "too short." One participant responded that "there's always something to learn; (the training is) never too long."

When asked how they would compare the training received with what they expected, 33 percent responded that it was "better than expected"; 53 percent responded "the same as expected," and 14 percent felt that it was "worse than expected." Those who said the training was "better than expected" cited the following reasons: good balance of practical experience with theory and lecture; the acquisition of new knowledge that was unexpected; and excellent instruction and materials.

One student wrote that "before I came to the U.S., I had a different perspective about the country and people in general, and I was especially worried about my security. But, I noticed that not all places are as dangerous as in the films, especially not in Boulder. About the course, the lectures in the U.S. are more practical and precise than in Macedonia. I was very satisfied with the relation between professors and students - it is really informal but, at the same time, serious."

One of the two individuals who said that the training was "worse than expected" said that his training was more directed toward central bankers and policymakers and not toward his professional level. The other stated that he did not meet some of the key people he hoped to meet, that his original request for an "attachment" at an institution such as the State Department proved impossible to secure because of security reasons, and he felt another federal institution could have been found that would accommodate foreigners.

Employment Upon Return to Home Country

Ninety-three percent of the respondents (14) expect to return to the same position of employment upon return to their home countries; one student had no job prior to coming to the U.S. for training. Among the contributions they expect to make upon return, the participants cited the following in rank order: to improve operational procedures in their organizations; to manage a project, office, division, or company; to initiate new projects or services; to influence or make policy, to train others; and to improve operational procedures, programs, or services.

Multiplier Potential

Only 20 percent of the respondents (3) indicated that their training program was explicitly intended to help them train others upon their return to country, and all three students reported that the training included activities designed to teach them to train others. Eighty percent said that this was not the intention of their program.

Each of the three respondents cited the program activities designed to help him or her train others: 1) staff development, teacher's training needs, organizational structure and behavior, helpful handouts; 2) presentation skills, economy and efficiency review, training for managers; and 3) new methods for conducting bank examinations.

Relevancy of Training

Participants were asked about the relevancy of their U.S. training to the situations and challenges in their own occupations and how useful the knowledge and skills they learned will be when they return home. Table 5 reports the responses to these questions.

Table 5 Relevancy of U.S. Training

Area	Completely	A Lot	Partially	Not A Lot	Not At All
To Own Occupation	40%	13%	47%		
Usefulness On Return	40%	13%	47%		

In an open-ended question, participants were encouraged to list what else might have made their program more useful or relevant to their needs. Seven of the fifteen participants responded. Among the items cited were: the tax administration program should be oriented toward people with **similar** problems of economy and administration; opportunity for on-the-job training; more practical courses rather than theory; satellite campus did not offer the richness of courses and libraries as the main campus; opportunity for internship; and longer course duration.

Preparation for Return to Home Countries

Every scholar made preparations for his or her return to their home countries. Among these preparations were: gathering resources to take home (67%), maintaining contacts with employers (60%), writing or revising resumes (67%), practicing job search skills (13%), preparing a work plan (47%), preparing presentations for communities (13%), and submitting job applications (7%). No one was preparing to go back to school upon return.

Understanding the U.S.

Among the goals of the Eastern Europe Participant Training Program are enhanced understandings of U.S. citizens, government, economic systems, and culture. The involvement of the participants in the U.S. experience is discussed in this section.

Two of the respondents had an opportunity for a homestay with a U.S. family. These homestays lasted five and six weeks. Ten participants said that they would have liked to have had the opportunity for a homestay with a U.S. family.

Table 6 shows the frequency of participant involvement in various activities while in the United States.

Table 6 Participation in U.S. Activities				
Activity	**Never**	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**	**Very Frequently**
Visit U.S. Family	46%	40%	7%	7%
Meet Local Leaders	60%	7%	20%	13%
Contact Private Sector Business	53%	20%	27%	
Visit Volunteer Organizations	79%	21%		
Observe Civic Activities	80%	7%	13%	
Attend Cultural Events	7%	28%	53%	13%
Attend Religious Services	50%	28%	22%	
Participate in Recreation	33%	20%	20%	27%
Travel within the U.S.	13%	60%	27%	

While these activities are not mandated by the Project Paper, it is anticipated that, because of the nature of this program, frequent opportunities for interaction will occur with U.S. citizens on many levels. It would appear that additional opportunities should be provided in order to increase the interaction of the participants with local leaders, private sector visit, volunteer organizations, and civic activities.

Impressions of the U.S. People and Culture

The participants were asked to record some of the most important impressions that they gained about the people of the U.S. and life in the U.S. as a result of their training program. The following are excerpts from their comments.

> "They (U.S. citizens) do believe in democracy as the best (form of government), are focused on efficiency, have high regard for governmental institutions, but have limited knowledge about the world outside the U.S."
>
> "There are big differences between the well-educated and simple people."
>
> "All the people are very friendly. Life in the U.S. is very interesting."

"People in the U.S. are friendly, easy to contact, seeking to be too independent from each other, especially women. Diversity, variety, and extremities in society are typical traits of Americans. It is easy to communicate with everybody here, but is good only on the surface level. Everything that Americans created in a very short period (200 years) is unbelievable, but not everything is acceptable that is created in America. America is a proud, wealthy,. strong nation."

"People of the U.S. are very kind. You can ask for help from even unknown people on the street. They are cultured and disciplined, very serious during work, and always on time - everywhere."

"American people are very good. They are informed, with a good sense of humor."

"People of the U.S. are not different from the people of Poland with regard to voluntary payment of taxes. The IRS has more problems with money laundering, illegal activities than the Polish IRS, although they (the US.) can gather more information from banks and other institutions, or informants. The Polish IRS does not have these sources of information because our law is different. But despite these differences, the problems are similar."

"The people of the U.S. are the same as people from Poland, but in the U.S. there are more criminal cases, such as money laundering and narcotics."

"The U.S. people are responsible to their jobs and produce a high quality product."

General Appraisal

Benefits of the Program to the Participants

Sixty-six percent of the participants rated the enhancement of their professional capabilities as the greatest benefit of the program. Fourteen percent ranked the exposure to other cultures as their greatest benefit, while 14 percent cited obtaining a degree as the greatest benefit. Thirty-nine percent ranked professional contacts as the second greatest benefit of the program.

Overall Satisfaction Level

On a five point scale, from "Very Satisfied" to "Very Dissatisfied", all but one of the respondents said that they were "very satisfied" (60%), or "satisfied" (33%) with the overall U.S. training program. The one participant, who said that he was "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," added that he was "satisfied with what I accomplished, but I could have accomplished more."

Recommendation of the Program to Others

Experience has shown that a participant's willingness to recommend the program to other individuals from his country is a good indication of his or her satisfaction with the program. In response to the question, "Would you recommend this program to other people from your country?", fourteen of the fifteen participants (93%) responded "yes." One individual said that he did not know, because "it depended on the individual."

What did the participants like most about the U.S. experience?

The responses to this question were wide-ranging from: the Rocky Mountains to my training course; professional, cultural and entertainment experiences with people of foreign nations; gaining a deeper understanding of the system of government in the U.S. and the accessibility of public officials; my experience with American people, especially in the public service; the great hospitality and caring; communicating with Americans; Washington and the museums; President Clinton's speeches; the relaxed, not very intensive way of living, laws and order that most of the people obey and follow; the great respect for a client; field visits and traveling; getting acquainted with life in a completely different environment; improving and switching from British to American English; the time to talk to people at length - and usually they had the time, too; fascination with the financial institutions (of Chicago), the interesting museums, and skyscrapers as symbols of developed technology and wealth; and everything about American life and culture.

What did the participants like least about the U.S. experience?

The responses to this question were often quite personal: the behavior of "crazy people" in the street; unsolved social problems and the inequality of social opportunities for all; a touch of racial prejudice; television, radio, and newspapers (much ado about nothing); beggars in the streets; eating and chewing everywhere (the cult of food); the advertising system; the extremely great waste of everything, everywhere, by everybody; the lack of public transportation in the South; and poverty, illiteracy, criminality - "surprises, and a shame, for such a developed and rich society."

What would the participants do differently if they could design this USAID training program?

Although most prefaced their comments with positive statements about the program, eleven of the fifteen participants responded to this question. The remaining four individuals said that they would change nothing.

> "Better preparation of the participants about the United States."
>
> "Include other participants from Eastern Europe in my program; the group could have been more identical."
>
> "In an admittedly untypical situation such as my own, I would make organizations handing the trainee more alert to his or her needs."

"The program is designed very well, and meets the expectations of the participants wherever they come from."

"It is very difficult to imagine myself in the position of designer of a USAID training program; I just know that it is very difficult to design."

"Try to choose professors who speak American English; more practice, less lecturing; offer the participants several courses to choose from; make it flexible according to the needs of the participant."

"I would include more field work with the special (IRS) agents as a part of the training program."

Aguirre International Observations

While this is a limited report of only fifteen participants who have recently completed PIET programmed short-term training program and returned to their home countries, there are several observations and conclusions that can be drawn.

- Orientation programs do not appear to be reaching all of the participants; five reported that they received no predeparture orientation, and three say that they did not receive an orientation in the U.S.

- Participants reported lower satisfaction levels with the orientation topics of course content, USAID policies and regulations, and U.S. culture. The most dissatisfaction (53%) was expressed about the lack of cultural and personal preparation provided.

- Ninety-three percent of the participants stated that they, nevertheless, felt prepared for their training program.

- Nearly 67 percent of the participants were involved in the planning of their programs, and most felt satisfied with their level of involvement.

- Eighty percent of the participants felt that their programs were designed around their needs, while 20 percent said that they were only partially designed to meet their needs.

- For the most part, participants were satisfied with their logistical and support services. The area of local transportation, medical care and insurance, however, were ranked lowest, but only in the undecided category.

- Three of the fifteen participants (20%) encountered some social or cultural adjustment problems.

- Minimal difficulty with English language was reported in the areas of writing, reading assignments, writing, class discussions, and oral reports.

- Participants were generally satisfied with various aspects of their training programs; two individuals were "undecided" about how they felt about the Course Content, while one each was undecided about the availability and quality of Computers and Equipment, and the opportunities for Consultation with Instructors.

- Only two participants described internships programs; one was dissatisfied and one had a very positive experience.

- Seventy-three (73) percent of the participants said that they achieved their objectives "completely" or "to a great extent."

- Eighty (80) percent felt that the training was at "about the right level."

- Eighty (80) percent felt that the length of their program was "about right", while 20 percent characterized it as "too short."

- When asked to compare the training received with their expectations, eighty-six (86) percent of the participants responded that it was "better than expected" (33%), or "the same as expected" (53%).

- Fourteen of the fifteen participants reported that they would be returning to the same job that they held before the U.S. training.

- Fifty-three (53) percent of the participants felt that their U.S. training was relevant to their own occupations "completely" (40%), or "a lot" (13%). Forty-seven (47%) thought that the training was only "partially" relevant.

- Participants had opportunities to participate in a variety of activities in the U.S. (visiting U.S. families, contacting private sector business, attending cultural events, and traveling within the U.S.) either occasionally or very frequently. Some participants reported infrequent or no involvement with local leaders, private sector businesses, volunteer organizations, or civic activities.

- Ninety-three percent of the participants reported that they were "very satisfied" (60) or "satisfied" (33%) with their overall U.S. training program, and 93 percent would recommend the program to others from his or her country.

Recommendations

Although 93 percent of the PIET participants reported that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their overall U.S. training program, based on observations and conclusions drawn from the Exit Questionnaire data, the following suggestions and recommendations are offered to make the program more even more valuable and useful to the participants.

- Thorough orientation programs are fundamental to a successful program. Every effort must be made to assure that each participant receives a predeparture orientation, especially in the areas of course content, USAID policies and regulations, U.S. culture, and cultural adjustment.

- PIET is commended for involving the participant in the planning of their programs, and for making their involvement meaningful and relevant to their needs.

- Internship programs must be thoroughly planned with the needs of the participant in mind and closely monitored to insure that these needs are being met. There must also be sufficient flexibility in order to redirect the internship if it should prove unworkable with the specific trainee for whom it was intended.

- While 73 percent of the participants said that they achieved their objectives "completely" or "to a great extent," and 80 percent felt that the training was at "about at the right level," 20 percent thought that the length of their program was "too short." This last observation should be balanced with the statement that 86 percent thought that the program was "better than expected" or "the same as expected." However, program managers may want to examine and review the amount of effort required by the program related to its time constraints.

- While 53 percent of the participants deemed their programs to be relevant to their own occupations, 47 percent felt that they were only partially relevant. Relevancy of training is critical to the success of the training and has great implications for future impact. This issue of relevancy should be addressed in collaborative program planning between PIET and the participant or the training organization and the participant.

- To the extent possible, the arrangements of homestays and visits with U.S. families would be welcomed by many of the participants (67%) and useful in increasing their understanding of U.S. life and culture. Arrangements for more interaction between private sector businesspersons, local leaders, volunteer organizations, and civic activities would also be useful to the participant's understanding of these U.S. individuals and instititutions.