



COUNTRY PROFILE



USAID assistance in Bulgaria has focused on helping the country achieve a more prosperous, stable, democratic future. The new generation of Bulgarians will grow up as citizens of the European Union.

OVERVIEW

The American people, through USAID, have contributed more than \$600 million to support Bulgaria's transition to a market-based democracy. USAID has been providing economic and technical assistance to Bulgarian institutions and organizations since 1990.



Starting with humanitarian assistance and support to political parties for the first democratic elections in 1990, USAID programs evolved to address the needs of the country and to help Bulgaria overcome the difficulties of the transition to democratic governance and a market economy. Together with its partners, USAID has assisted with developing private businesses, improving local democratic governance, supporting the reform of the rule of law, building new institutions and systems, building human capacity to manage the changes, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the country. With Bulgaria's effective EU membership as of January 2007, the economic assistance provided to the country under the Support to Eastern European Democracy (SEED) Act will end in September 2008.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

RULE OF LAW

The Rule of Law program is the centerpiece of USAID assistance with three major components: justice sector reform, anti-corruption, and reducing trafficking in persons. The many judicial reform issues in Bulgaria require USAID to work at both the national and local levels with regional, district and appellate courts, lawyers, non-governmental organizations and professional organizations. The Mission's anti-corruption activities work to strengthen the Government of Bulgaria's institutional capacity to prevent corruption and enhance transparency and accountability, especially in government audit, internal controls, and public procurement. A civil society component promotes anti-corruption public awareness, monitors public administration work, and investigates corruption allegations. USAID anti-trafficking efforts focus on building capacity of Bulgarian institutions to combat this problem, as well as support a shelter for child victims.

BULGARIA SNAPSHOT

Autonomous since 1878, independent since 1908

Population: 7.4 million (2006)

GDP per capita: \$9,600 (2005)

Key USAID Priorities:

- Rule of Law
- Economic Growth
- Local Governance



COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

USAID ASSISTANCE TO BULGARIA

1990-1994 – \$ 133 million
 1995-1998 – \$ 134 million
 1999-2002 – \$ 166 million
 2003-2006 – \$ 121 million

Humanitarian assistance – \$ 62 million



USAID programs help improve the business environment and create opportunities for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs throughout Bulgaria.

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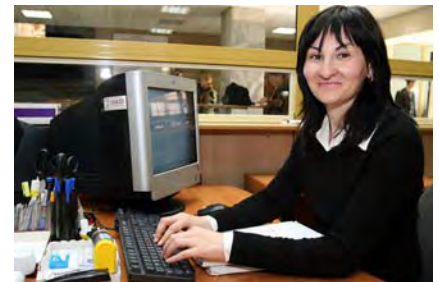
<http://bulgaria.usaid.gov>

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND GROWTH

The graduation focus of the USAID economic portfolio is on projects that enhance the business environment, contribute to job creation, and improve access to financial resources. USAID assists the government to plan and implement forward-looking economic reforms in the areas of small and medium enterprise growth, competitiveness, and foreign direct investment. USAID strives to promote growth and job creation in a sustainable manner by strengthening capacity of the private sector. A project aimed at improving efficiency of the labor market in Bulgaria seeks to reduce the mismatch of skills between supply and demand for human resources. USAID-supported reforms in business registration and enforcement of judgments help to better protect economic rights and promote an improved business environment. The Bulgarian–American Enterprise Fund, active since 1991, continues to support the growth of private enterprises.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

USAID is building on its unique investment in the local government sector, while broadening involvement to include community building issues. To provide local governments with enhanced autonomy and availability of resources, USAID’s major tasks focus on decentralization legislation and a mechanism for dialogue between central and local government on ongoing reforms. This effort is complemented by innovative public-private partnerships for the provision of social services, and programs to promote inclusion of vulnerable groups. Conflict prevention and ethnic integration issues are addressed primarily at the community level. USAID programs especially target ethnic minorities, vulnerable groups and communities, and youth.



USAID Model Courts in Veliko Turnovo and other cities are using technology and customer service to make courts more open and efficient.

SPECIAL AND CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

Sustaining the reforms of Bulgaria’s economy, its democratic institutions, and the rule of law depends on a strong support infrastructure. USAID’s portfolio in this area addresses urgent needs of the country to promote national and regional stability. This includes training for Bulgarian professionals, advocacy and public awareness through media, enhanced Avian Influenza preparedness, and flood relief assistance. USAID also supports the American University in Bulgaria, the only American-style liberal arts education institution in Southeastern Europe.