

Capital: Sofia
Population: 7.9 million
GDP(Purchasing Power Parity): \$49.23 billion
Population below national poverty line: 12.6%
GDP per capita : \$1,978 (2002); \$1,794 (Q3, 2003)
GDP Growth: 4.8% (2002); 4.2% (Q3, 2003)
Religion: Bulgarian Orthodox 83.9%, Muslim 12.2%, Roman Catholic 0.6%, Jewish 0.008%, Protestant 0.5%, Gregorian-Armenian 0.1%, and others 0.1% (2002)
Language: Bulgarian, secondary languages roughly correspond to ethnic breakdown
President: Georgi Parvanov
Prime Minister: Simeon Saxe-Coburg
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 2004: Total AEEB - \$27.84 million, USAID Total - \$22.44 million

Rule of Law and Democratic Governance (FY04 \$10.70 million, 48%):

Rule of Law is the centerpiece of U.S. assistance to Bulgaria. USAID leads efforts in judicial sector reform, anti-corruption, and anti-trafficking. Programs in justice sector reform address the lack of 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. 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 (FY04 \$8.12 million, 36%):

Despite impressive reforms exhibited in the last six years, Bulgaria remains the poorest of EU applicants and lags in the development of key economic indicators. USAID fosters the development of a competitive and thriving market economy as a vehicle to distribute, to the majority of Bulgarians, the benefits of increased prosperity. USAID programs support reform efforts of the Bulgarian government, such as creating a business-friendly environment to attract investments and encourage growth of small and medium enterprises. Direct technical assistance to individual firms and competitive industry sectors promotes trade and investment. To boost the growth of jobs and the private sector, USAID programs provide increased opportunities to access financial resources. The Mission additionally addresses adverse social impacts of transition by actively supporting pension reform assistance and labor market efficiency efforts.

Special and Cross-Cutting Initiatives (FY04 \$3.61 million, 16%):

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: Debra McFarland, Mission Director
 (Tel: 359-2-951-5070, Fax: 359-2-964-0102) NDK Admin. Bldg. Fl. 5, 1 Bulgaria Sq., Sofia 1463
 USAID/Washington: Geeta Raj (Tel: 202-712-5954) Bulgaria Desk
http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/bg