

# Record Number of Applicants in 2011

## FULBRIGHT PROGRAM FORMS CULTURAL LINK BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE U.S.

*Since its inception in Hungary 33 years ago, the Fulbright program has brought some 900 American scholars, students, artists, and scientists to Hungary, and an equivalent number of Hungarians to America, for research, teaching, and joint projects that enrich both societies.*

BY REKA A. FRANCISCK

➤ THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM is the flagship of the U.S. Government's efforts in international educational exchange. "Active in 150 countries, its alumni includes 18 heads of state, 43 recipients of the Nobel Prize, one Secretary General of the UN, one Secretary General of NATO and a large number of corporate leaders," Executive Director of Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange' (FCEE), Huba Bruckner, tells Diplomacy and Trade. The program was established in Hungary in 1978, after U.S. President Jimmy Carter returned the Hungarian Holy Crown to Budapest. In 1992, a Fulbright Commission was established in the Hungarian capital by legislation as a public body supported by the U.S. Department of State and the Government of the Republic of Hungary to operate this official program between Hungary and the United States. "The Ministry of National Resources provides the office space for our Commission and contributes 20% of the total costs," the Director reveals. Additional financial contribution was provided recently by Hungarian bank OTP and the foundations of Sandor Demjan, Gabor Kovacs and Charles Simonyi. Bruckner sees growing interest in the program he considers one of the largest and most prestigious in the world. "During the last four years, membership of the Hungarian Fulbright Association has grown steadily," he



says, underlining the continued vitality of the exchange program. "This year, we saw a record number of applicants." Leading the FCEE, Bruckner is responsible for providing access to the program for Hungarian citizens, organizing their selection and general administration. He highlights the Fulbright Education USA Advising Center (FEAC), an 'essential' part of the Commission's work, which he says provides the primary source of information in Hungary for those interested in U.S. education. In the 2011/2012 school year, 18 high schools, seven in Budapest and 11 in the country, will be visited by the 'Meet the Scientist Program', with 17 lecturers who are former Fulbright scholars. "Compared to last year, when we first introduced this project, the program has grown and widened. In 2010, ten schools took part in this initiative, this year the number of partner schools almost doubled," Bruckner remarks. The 'Meet the Scientist' program was launched by the Hungarian Association for Innovation, the Hungarian Fulbright Association and the Embassy of the United States of America in Budapest with the aim to promote the study of natural sciences as well as education in the United States among high school students in Hungary. "This could be our social responsibility program, showing our social concerns relating to Hungarian education, which provides less and less students in Physics and Chemistry studies," Bruckner notes. "In addition to this project, we also organize annual road shows, visits to university campuses to advertise the

Fulbright program," he adds. According to him, the Alumni Association plays a key role in promoting and helping the Fulbright Program. "Since 1978, up to 900 Hungarians have studied in the U.S. and nearly 950 U.S. nationals studied in Hungary. (There are more than 300,000 Fulbright alumni worldwide.) Each year, we award 35 scholarships to Hungarian citizens, out of up to 180 applicants," Bruckner continues, adding that those "popular and preferred" courses for Hungarians today are U.S. studies, natural sciences, environmental protection and activities of civil organizations, in addition to MBA courses. U.S. students on the other hand seek courses in mathematics and music pedagogy studies, which are among the most internationally recognized studies offered by Hungarian universities. Fulbright grants typically range from three months to an academic year and generally pay for travel, tuition, start-up funds, living expenses and health insurance. "We allow applicants to shape their own projects and choose the institution that will host them," the Director points out, adding that he would encourage anyone interested in international education to apply. "It's a fantastic opportunity and a lifetime experience" he says. "With access to more than 4,000 universities, the Fulbright Program literally offers you the world. And after the grant period, Fulbright Associations - the Fulbright alumni community - offer continuous support by providing further opportunities." <