

**STATEMENT BY
DR. DAN E. DAVIDSON
PROFESSOR, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
AND
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:
ACTR/ACCELS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

MARCH 3, 2015

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present this statement for the record on behalf of the American Councils for International Education. I am requesting that the Subcommittee recommend funding in the fiscal year 2016 State, Foreign Operations bill of at least \$623,079,000 for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and in support of continued assistance for East Europe and Eurasia, including several assistance models in the educational sector that are making a major difference for the successor generation of leaders in that part of the world. Further, I ask that funding with ECA for Citizen Exchange Programs be at least at the fiscal year 2015 level of \$100,000,000.

My name is Dan E. Davidson and I have worked in Russia, Eurasia, and East Europe as a scholar, teacher, and director of several major assistance initiatives for nearly 40 years. I am president of American Councils for International Education, a nonprofit organization that works in the republics of the former Soviet Union, East Europe, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Founded in 1974, American Councils is one of the leading and best-known U.S. organizations administering U.S. Government, World Bank, foreign government, and privately funded exchange and educational development programs.

ADVANCING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

Tensions across Eurasia and Eastern Europe are very high right now in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support of Eastern Ukraine separatists. Many official channels of communication with Russia, including NATO, G-8, as well as the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Groups, and even NASA, have been suspended by the US as a result. Their actions have been met by counter-sanctions on the Russian Federation side. Region-to-region and people-to-people connections, as a result, have acquired even greater importance than previously for the US, if our nation is to be able to maintain necessary levels of engagement with Russia.

Congress has played a vital role in defining our national goals for East Europe, Eurasia, and other nations and regions of strategic importance to the United States. It did so by enacting the FREEDOM Support (FSA) and the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Acts and

other creative programs that have done much to build relations of respect and trust with new generations of citizens across this very large and strategic region. This Subcommittee, in particular, deserves credit for embracing these activities. In the early years of this century, unfortunately, the FSA and SEED Acts were seriously weakened in favor of a more generic, “one size fits all” approach to both the educational and research exchanges, as well as U.S. technical assistance programs. The results of these cutbacks are now keenly felt on many fronts.

I would particularly like to thank this Subcommittee for its continued support of the Department of State’s Title VIII, Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Program. American Councils is among the administering organizations for this program. Title VIII is now more critical than ever to our national security interests, and yet, for the first time in 23 years, the State Department declined to implement this cost-effective program in 2013 or 2014. Congress in the fiscal year 2015 omnibus agreement provided \$3 million to restore funding for the program.

I recommend that the U.S. continue strengthening and re-focusing our exchange activities with the nations of the former Soviet Union and East Europe at the same time that it continues to hold some of the priorities and to replicate program models that have functioned well in Eurasia, especially in Central Asia, Afghanistan, South Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and other parts of the Muslim world.

The non-Fulbright side of State Department exchanges and assistance programs focuses on transparency, ethnic diversity, and access to educational opportunity, through a sustained and affirmative effort to reach beyond the traditional elites and residents of overseas capital cities. More importantly, these programs provide a significant long-term multiplier effect at relatively little cost as alumni networks in the home countries take on increasingly important roles in government, the private sector and the NGO community. They deliver professional development support to early career teachers and researchers in the US and overseas, and they provide vitally important immersion language training, internships, and field work support for US students and graduate students in a dozen languages and regions of the world that are deemed critical by the US government.

For that reason, Madam Chairwoman, I ask that the Subcommittee include language in support of the following exchange programs:

- Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)**
- American-Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE)**
- Youth Exchange and Study (YES)**
- Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP)**
- Professional Fellowship Program (PFP)**
- Educational Advising Centers (Education USA)**
- National Security Language Initiative - Youth (NSLI-Y)**
- Critical Language Scholarships Program (CLS)**
- Title VIII (Research and Training in East European/Eurasian Regions)**

FOREIGN OPERATIONS PROGRAMS

The U.S. currently supports a number of relatively new and unusually important assistance programs in the Eurasian/South East Europe region, which, based on my own experience, deserve particular consideration as models of focused U. S. assistance. Each contributes to meeting the challenges of preparing a new generation of citizens for the demands of the globalized economy and the concomitant needs for stronger workforce development, professional education, reduction of corruption, and greater social cohesion. They include the support of merit based testing for university admissions in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine; support for the European Humanities University (EHU), the only contemporary university in the world currently operating in exile (in Lithuania) after its expulsion from Belarus by the Lukashenko regime; and the support of collaborative research and language training for US and Eurasian scholars under the State Department's highly respected Title VIII Program.

IN CONCLUSION

Madam Chairwoman, as you proceed with decisions on the fiscal year 2016 bill, I request that you continue to provide strong funding for the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and Foreign Assistance programs, particularly the programs mentioned in this statement. Also, I ask that you provide continued funding for the accounts for the states of Eurasia and Eastern Europe to insure adequate support under your bill for much needed programs in educational development and exchange.

Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to present my views to the Subcommittee.