



## Assessment of Selected Educational Exchange Programs in Turkey



# Executive Summary

## Overview

May 2002

The Office of Policy and Evaluation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in the U.S. Department of State contracted with K.W. Tunnell Company Inc. and PDS, Inc. to conduct a pilot assessment of selected international educational exchange programs in Turkey from September 1998 through July 2000. The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the cumulative effect of ECA programs as they relate to foreign policy objectives, which included the goals of the Bureau, the strategic goals of the U.S. Embassy, and the objectives of the individual programs. In addition, the assessment was designed to provide feedback to program managers they would find helpful to their own practical understanding of how the programs were operating.

For the assessment, the evaluators selected four programs to review,

| Program  | Program Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>The Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program</b>    | Awards grants to scholars from around the world to conduct research, lecture, or pursue combined lecturing and research in the United States. Turkish participants' average stay in the US is 11 months, though some stay for up to two years.  |
| <b>The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program</b> | Brings accomplished professionals with a commitment to public service to the United States at a midpoint in their careers for a year of study and related professional experience. The program provides a basis for establishing lasting ties between citizens of the United States and their professional counterparts in other countries. |
| <b>The International Visitors (IV) Program</b>   | Brings current or potential leaders in government, politics, the media, education, and other fields to the US for four weeks to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to experience the United States firsthand.   |
| <b>The Fulbright Student Program</b>             | Awards grants to recent university graduates, masters and doctoral candidates, and young professionals and artists for degree, non-degree and specialized study in the US. Turkish participants usually stay in the US for two to three years, though a few stay somewhat longer.   |

Turkey was selected as the case study because of its strategic importance, the wide representation of ECA programs in Turkey, and the anticipated quality of its records on program alumni.

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## Methodology and Scope

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The assessment secondarily sought to develop an evaluation methodology for obtaining program impact information that could provide practical feedback about program operations that might contribute to more strategic program management, and that could be replicated in other countries. The assessment focused on four primary themes:

- Operational Issues – How the aspects of the processes of selection, preparation for departure (including orientation/advisement), and support/adjustment in the United States may have contributed to, or inhibited, the success of programs.
- Quality and Texture of Experience in the United States – Reactions to the academic/professional milieu and degree to which the participant's objectives were met.
- Personal/Professional Impact – Effects on the US experience on the participant's personal and professional life after his or her return to Turkey.
- Indicators of Longer-Term Impact – Lasting or fundamental change on the part of the individual participant and on the organization with which he or she interacts.

To conduct the assessment, consultants Dr. Joel Aronson (KW Tunnell) and Mr. William Hughes (PDS, Inc.) reviewed the array of programs in Turkey by interviewing 20 ECA program managers and regional public diplomacy officers. The evaluators examined data records at the Fulbright Commission in Ankara<sup>1</sup> and met informally with two or three individuals from each of the programs in Ankara and Istanbul to identify themes for further exploration in the study. They also hired a research group from the Middle Eastern Technical University (METU) to conduct the interviews. While most interviews occurred in Ankara, others were carried out in Istanbul, Izmir, Isparta, and Urfa. Participants were given the option to be interviewed in English or in Turkish.

The four-program assessment was conceived as one continuous effort divided into two work phases because there was a qualitative difference in the interviewing experience for the two efforts. For Phase 1, the subjective experience of the participants in the Fulbright Visiting Scholar and Humphrey Fellowship programs was similar in that they spent one year in the United States and returned to a work situation that was the same as, or similar to, the one they left. The Phase 2 participants in the Fulbright Visiting Student and International Visitor programs had substantially different experiences: the student remained in the United States for several years usually before embarking on a career, and the International Visitors spent four weeks in the United States usually while in mid-career. Due in large part to job changes and relocation since returning to Turkey, the Phase 2 participants proved to be much more difficult to locate and the rate of successful interviews was lower than for the Phase 1 participants.

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<sup>1</sup> This effort involves only participants traveling to the United States because the primary interest was the impact they have on their home institutions. It was agreed that U.S. participants generally have a much more narrow focus to their study in other countries. For that and other technical reasons, they were not included in this assessment.

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| Program                                     | Time Strata Subgroup  | Sampling Description   |
|---|---|--|
| Fulbright Scholar<br>1 year experience      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5 years earlier (awarded 1991-1993)</li> <li>▪ 10 years earlier (awarded 1986-1988)</li> </ul>   | From the list of participants in the target years, the evaluators selected a random 50% sample from each span of years for a total of 46 participants. They also randomly selected a few additional names to use as substitutes. |
| Humphrey<br>1 year experience               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5 years earlier (awarded 1991-1993)</li> <li>▪ 10 years earlier (awarded 1986-1988)</li> <li>▪ 15 years earlier (awarded 1981-1983)</li> </ul>   | Only 3-6 Humphrey participants are chosen each year so 100% of participants for each span of years were selected resulting in 26 participants.   |
| International Visitor<br>1 month program    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 years earlier (awarded 1996)</li> <li>▪ 6 years earlier (awarded 1993)</li> <li>▪ Individual and group participants from both years</li> </ul> | The evaluators included 100% of participants from 1993 and 1996 and sampled 50% of people in group programs and 100% of the individual program participants for a total of 50 participants.                                      |
| Fulbright Student<br>Average 3 year program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5 years earlier (award 1990-1992)</li> <li>▪ 10 years earlier (awarded 1985-1987)</li> </ul>   | The evaluators sampled 50% of the 66 participants in the 85-87 years and 100% of the 40 participants from the 90-92 years for a total target of 80.  |

Since a major focus of the study was to assess the longer-term impact of the exchange experience on the individual and their organizations, the evaluators gathered information from subgroups of former participants based who had returned to Turkey five years earlier (grant award in 1992), 10 years earlier (awarded in 1987), and for Humphrey 15 years earlier (awarded in 1982). For International Visitors (IV), the selection and sampling was modified due to the program being different from the others. IV participants may come as individuals or in a group, also due to their more senior level, it was assumed that their strongest impact would occur soon after they returned to Turkey, so interview participants were selected from three and six years earlier. The evaluators expanded each subgroup (except IV) to include the year before the participants were selected and the year after because the number of grants awarded by a program varied year to year, depending on funding levels or other considerations, and there was often a delay between grant award and the time the individual began his or her program experience.

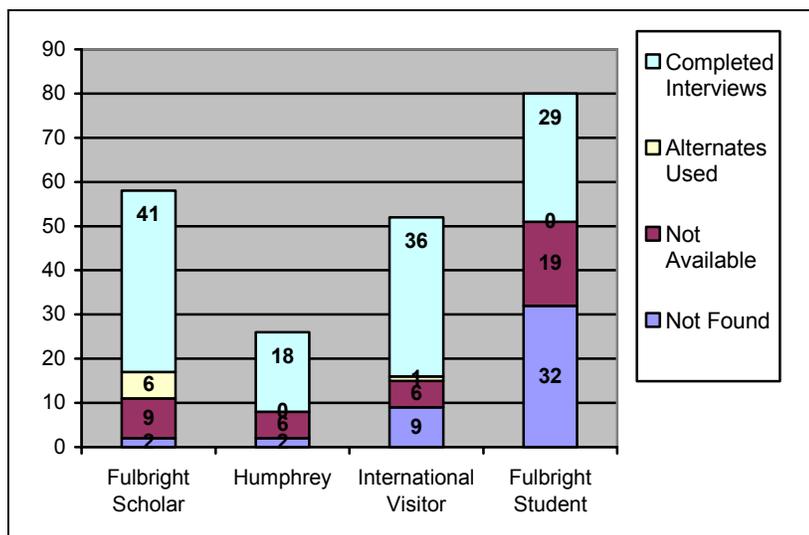
Interview response rates for the four programs were:

*Fulbright Scholar* – 89 % (41 of 46)

*Humphrey Fellowship* – 69% (18 of 26)

*International Visitor* – 72% (36 of 50)

*Fulbright Student* – 36% (29 of 80)



## Key Findings<sup>2</sup>

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As in any study, there are certain inherent constraints and limitations relative to how universally the results can be applied. While the samples from each of the programs in the study are large relative to their size in Turkey and the evaluators are certain that the results are stable from the programs studied, the outcomes may or may not apply to the same programs as they operate in other countries. The research demonstrated:

**Participants in these programs learn much about the United States through their experience here and stay connected to the United States.** When they return to Turkey, they feel they understand the United States better and they continue to interact with US institutions and individuals for many years into their future.

- Of those who visited the United States for the first time, the percentage that developed a more positive view of the United States was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 80%
  - Humphrey Fellow – 80%
  - International Visitor – 90%
  - Fulbright Student – 70%
- The percentage of participants reporting continued professional or social contact with the United States was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 90% (Predominantly professional)
  - Humphrey Fellow – 65% (Professional and social)
  - International Visitor – 75% (Professional and social)
  - Fulbright Student – 85% (Professional and social)
- The percentage of participants reporting keeping up with US affairs was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 95%
  - Humphrey Fellow – 90%
  - International Visitor – Not Asked
  - Fulbright Student – 95%
- The percentage of participants who have revisited the United States was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 60 %
  - Humphrey Fellow – 35%
  - International Visitor – 45%
  - Fulbright Student – 75%

**Participants have changed as a result of their US experience.** Personally, they relate a new self-assurance, an acceptance of the concept of cooperation and teamwork, a softening of their own rigidities, and increased flexibility in dealing with problems. Professionally, many feel they are different than their peers: they are better problem-solvers, they have a broader worldview, they are more authoritative, they initiate more and look for ways to make things work.

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<sup>2</sup> For brevity in this document only key findings are listed. More findings for each program are presented by program in the full report.

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**Following their return to Turkey, participants have become agents of change of all kinds.** For example, they have reorganized university programs, altered the way classes are taught, changed the relationships between supervisors and subordinates, and have become leading national exponents in their professions.

- The percentage of participants reporting that as a result of the program experience they developed specific new ideas and implanted those ideas was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 85% developed new ideas, 50% of which were able to implement those ideas
  - Humphrey Fellow – 70% developed new ideas, 70% of which were able to implement those ideas
  - International Visitor – 90% developed new ideas, 70% of which were able to implement those ideas
  - Fulbright Student – 75% developed new ideas, 75% of which were able to implement those ideas
- The percentage of participants reporting they shared information gained on the program was:
  - Fulbright Scholar – 75%, mostly through lectures, conferences, workshops and student encouragement
  - Humphrey Fellow – 90%, mostly through seminars, articles and books
  - International Visitor – 70%, mostly through the implementation of new ideas (question not directly asked)
  - Fulbright Student – 90%, mostly through interaction with other students and colleagues

**Participant Quotes**

*“I now have a better understanding of the country [United States] and its diverse cultures. I can now interpret what I read in the newspaper or hear at the news differently. It is the difference between being an insider and outsider. My point of view is now closer to an insider’s point of view.” - Fulbright Visiting Student*

*“Now I am able to compare everything. I have studied social life and have gained a lot from the discrimination of Blacks in relation to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. I learned the role and the power of the private sector in US, how private sector is protected and how everything is based on it about the competition system there.” - International Visitor*

*“I learned the importance of contacts and networking to solve research problems that cannot be solved alone.” - Fulbright Visiting Scholar*

*“I feel that I am a global person. I met with people from different countries and learned their culture. I left my prejudices about different countries and cultures. I became more tolerant. Those are all positive experiences and have impact on my personal and professional life.” - Humphrey Fellow*

*“US study allows me to relate to my US colleagues more easily.” - Humphrey Fellow*

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## Conclusions

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While the degree of long-term impact cannot be known without a more extensive effort focused specifically on that element, it is clear from the interviews that something substantial and lasting is happening.

- Many of the participants found ways to share their knowledge immediately after returning from their U.S. experience.
- Nearly all participants developed field-related new ideas while in the States and about half implemented those plans in ways that enhanced the student experience at their university (new courses, different ways of doing research) or resulted in the installation of new management methods in their organizations.
- Most participants characterized themselves as different from those they worked with. They said they were better problem-solvers, were more open and flexible, more independent, viewed problems and issues from a broader perspective, and exercised a more inclusive style of leadership.
- Overall, more than half of the participants in these four programs have revisited the United States, almost all for professional reasons.
- A large proportion of participants continue to follow U.S. affairs and to maintain business and professional contacts in the United States, even though many returned to Turkey from their program experience more than 10 years ago.

It is apparent that face-to-face interviews carried out by a recognized university with the sanction of the program managers resulted in excellent cooperation and obvious candor. The success rate for obtaining the desired information through these interviews was far beyond the common return rates for mailed (or emailed) questionnaires and the quality of the responses obtained by the evaluators was much greater.

The evaluators recognize that Turkey is different from most other countries in both the general level of English language competence among the constituencies drawn upon to supply program participants (which is high), and in the number of participants selected each year. Even in countries where programs are substantially smaller than those reviewed in Turkey, the information that results from a series of structured interviews can be treated as qualitative data and could provide important feedback information, especially when viewed in the context of a growing series of individual country studies.

## Contact Information

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For more information about this evaluation, or to request a copy of the 188-page report, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 619-5307, by email at [evaluations@pd.state.gov](mailto:evaluations@pd.state.gov), or by mail at State Annex 44, Room 336, 301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547.