



FULBRIGHT  
Slovakia

Academic Year  
2024-2025

# ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

For the U.S. Government Fiscal Year:  
October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025

*Prepared by*

Lýdia Tobiášová - Executive Director  
November 2025



# TABLE OF CONTENT

1. FULBRIGHT COMMISSION .....	2
2. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION .....	5
3. SUMMARY OF GRANT ACTIVITIES .....	8
<i>A. Fulbright ETA Program.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>B. Fulbright U.S. Student Program .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>C. Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>D. Fulbright Specialist Program.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>E. Fulbright Slovak Student Program.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>F. Fulbright Slovak Scholar Program.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>G. FTEA Program.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>H. Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program.....</i>	<i>25</i>
4. NON-FULBRIGHT PROGRAMS.....	25
5. STUDY ABROAD ENGAGEMENT GRANT.....	26
6. 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF FULBRIGHT SLOVAKIA.....	27
7. ALUMNI.....	30
8. EducationUSA ADVISING CENTER.....	35
9. STAFF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL.....	38
10. FINANCIAL STATEMENT.....	41

The J. William Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic is an **independent, bi-national, not-for-profit** organization, whose mission is to promote **mutual understanding** between the people of the United States of America and Slovakia **through educational and cultural exchanges**.

The Commission was established by an executive agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America in 1994 (319/1994 Coll.). The subsequent agreement was signed in 2005 (98/2005 Coll.) and amended in 2017 (303/2017 Coll.). In 2017, the Slovak authorities started issuing national visa to Fulbright recipients and their dependents who have been exempted from visa fees since.

### **Main responsibilities of the Commission include:**

- administering grants and scholarships for U.S. and Slovak citizens to study, research, or lecture,
- identifying and selecting the best candidates in both countries and engage them in academic exchanges within the highest standards of the Fulbright Program,
- identifying fields in which mutual cooperation is desirable to further develop and increase expertise in particular fields,
- extending activities by establishing and supporting cost sharing programs with participating institutions,
- spreading awareness and providing information about study and research opportunities in the United States.

In addition to the administration of the Fulbright Program, the Commission is the only official institution in Slovakia certified to provide accurate, comprehensive, and current information about studies in the U.S. through its **EducationUSA Advising Center** which is part of the worldwide educational advising network of the U.S. Department of State.



## Board of the Commission

Formal oversight of the Fulbright Program is shared by the U.S. and Slovak governments through the Commission Board. The **bi-national Board's responsibilities**, defined by the governing bilateral agreement, include setting long-term program objectives and priorities, guiding activities that advance the purposes of the agreement, selecting and nominating grantees, and overseeing the Commission's operations and finances.

The Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic appoints Slovak Board members and the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic appoints American Board members. Both serve as Honorary Co-Chairpersons of the Board of the Commission.

## Honorary Co-Chairpersons

TOMÁŠ DRUCKER	Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic
GAUTAM RANA	U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic

## U.S. Members

ELIZABETH BLUMENTHAL	Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Bratislava, Treasurer
BENJAMIN COHEN	Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Bratislava (until December 2024)
DESTIN HODGES	Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Bratislava (since February 2025)
LINDA STEYNE	Lecturer, Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava
ALAN DYKSTRA	Freelance Consultant/Educator

## Slovak Members

JURAJ MACHÁČ	Director-General, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (until August 2025)
OKSANA TOMOVÁ	Director-General, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (since August 2025)
JANA PÉLIOVÁ	Vice-Rector, Bratislava University of Economics and Business (since January 2025)
PETER RUSIŇÁK	Deputy Director, AmCham (since January 2025)
MARCEL VYSOCKÝ	Director-General, Section of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, Alternate Treasurer

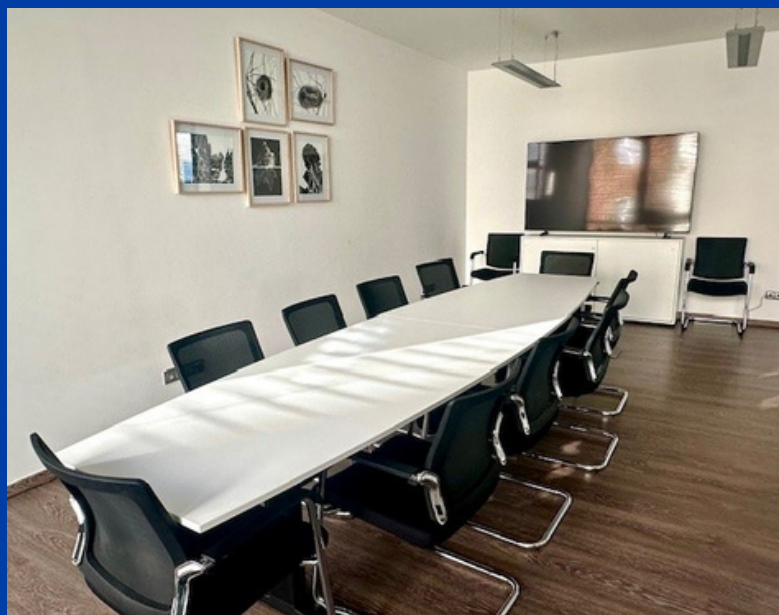
## Staff of the Commission

LÝDIA TOBIÁŠOVÁ	Executive Director
DENISA DOMARACKÁ	Finance Officer
SILVIA MIADOKOVÁ	Program Officer for Students/EducationUSA Adviser
DÁŠA TAKO VELICHOVÁ	Program Officer for Scholars

## Fulbright Office Relocation - Panenská 23, 811 03 Bratislava

On November 1, 2024, the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia moved to a new address at Panenská 23, 811 03 Bratislava, relocating from its previous nearby location at Panenská 29.

The new offices offer modern, spacious, and improved facilities, enabling the Commission to host a variety of events—such as pre-departure orientations for Slovak grantees, Board meetings, and smaller gatherings on site—enhancing its ability to support programs and engage with the Fulbright community.



The Commission administers a range of Fulbright awards for both Slovak and U.S. citizens. The 2024–25 academic year saw one of the largest cohorts to date, bringing the total number of participants in Fulbright programs administered by the Commission to **38**.

Fulbright participants are selected through an **open, merit-based competition**, ensuring that awards recognize excellence and potential.

#### **Programs for Slovak Citizens:**

1. Fulbright Slovak Student Program
2. Fulbright Slovak Scholar Program
3. Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence (S-I-R) Program
4. Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) Program
5. Fulbright Schuman Program
6. Hubert. H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

#### **Programs for American Citizens:**

1. Fulbright U.S. Student Program
2. Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program
3. Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program
4. Fulbright Specialist Program
5. Fulbright Schuman Program
6. Inter-Country Travel Grant for U.S. Lecturers in Europe

#### **Proshek-Fulbright Scholarship at the University of Minnesota**

On November 26, 2024, the Commission’s Executive Director **signed an amendment extending the Proshek-Fulbright Scholarship Program** in cooperation with the Proshek Foundation at the University of Minnesota. Following the extension, the Commission launched its first call for applications for the 2025–26 academic year and nominated two Slovak candidates, both of whom were accepted by the University of Minnesota.

Proshek-Fulbright Scholarship program is funded from the estate of Ms. Gabriela Proshek in honor of her husband, Dr. Charles E. Proshek, a prominent physician from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and former Honorary Consul of Czechoslovakia.

The scholarship supports highly qualified medical professionals. It enables physicians and researchers **in medicine and related fields—such as dentistry, pharmacy, genetics, and healthcare**—to engage in observation, consultation, teaching, and research at the University of Minnesota Medical School for 3–6 months, excluding clinical practice.

## List of Grantees: Academic Year 2024-2025

### U.S. Scholars

Aaron Creller	Philosophy	University of North Florida	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
Julie Felker	Business – Organizational Behavior	The University of Michigan	University of Prešov
Nicole Gullekson	Business & Management	University of Wisconsin–La Crosse	Bratislava University of Economics and Business
Amy Murphy	English Literature & Writing	Syracuse University	Comenius University in Bratislava
Karen Sandrik Ross	Law	Willamette University	Comenius University in Bratislava

### U.S. Students

Bailey Kaufman	Education	Fordham University	University of Prešov
Meghan Udell	Arts/Crafts	California Institute of the Arts	University of Arts and Design in Bratislava

### English Teaching Assistants

Gunner Bauer		Lawrence University	Gymnázium, Krompachy
Mary Beard		Lebanon Valley College	Konzervatórium, Bratislava
Sarah Bender		Notre Dame	Gymnázium Jána Chalupku, Brezno
Sadie Deshon		Liberty University	Obchodná akadémia, Senica
Benjamin Dever-Mendenhall		Cornell University	Gymnázium, Spišská Nová Ves
Henry Fox-Jurkowitz		Amherst College	Obchodná akadémia, Martin
Zoe Golomb		University of Florida	Gymnázium, Partizánske
Stuart Holton		University of Maryland-Baltimore County	Stredná odborná škola obchodu a služieb, Komárno
David Koeller		The University of Texas at Austin	Stredná priemyselná škola elektrotechnická, Prešov
Cole Matthews		Bowdoin College	Spojená škola, Trnava
Katherine Motley		University of Portland	Stredná zdravotnícka škola C. Šimurkovej, Trenčín
Nikhil Patel		Columbia University	Gymnázium, Pezinok
Ananya Shah		University of Southern California	Stredná zdravotnícka škola, Žilina
William Cyril Smith		University of Notre Dame	Cirkevná spojená škola, Humenné
Stephanie Virts		University of Colorado Boulder	Obchodná akadémia, Šurany

## Fulbright Specialists

Jozef Bajus	Education	Buffalo State University	Academy of Fine Arts and Design
Timothy Eng	Social Work and Mental Health	University of Central Florida	Trnava University
Jennifer Harrison	Education	Western Michigan University	KOGNEO
Stanislava Jergova	Biology Education	University of Miami	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
Maully Shah	Public/Global Health	Children's Hospital of Philadelphia	Children's Cardiac Centre

## Slovak Scholars

Jakub Januška	Psychology	Slovak Medical University	Boston University
Alexandra Kolenová	Biology/Genetics	Comenius University in Bratislava	Childrens Hospital of Philadelphia
Mária Murray Svidroňová	Economics	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica	Governors State University
Anna Slatinská	Education	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica	Boise State University

## Slovak Students

Dávid Hovančík	Physics	Charles University	University of Washington, Seattle
Mária Novotná	Architecture	Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava	University of Colorado, Denver
Michaela Vojníková	Biomedical Engineering	Brno University of Technology	University of California, San Diego

## Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program (FTEA) Fellows

Erika Čvirik Karpáty	Media Literacy	Stredná zdravotnícka škola, Nové Zámky	University of Wisconsin - Madison
Dana Mikulová	Media Literacy	Gymnázium Leonarda Stockela, Bardejov	University of Wisconsin - Madison

## Fulbright Schuman Student

Laura Jagelková	Linguistics	Slovak Academy of Sciences	Dartmouth College
-----------------	-------------	----------------------------	-------------------

## Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow

Zuzana Pavlíčková	Law & Human Rights	Slovak National Centre for Human Rights	American University, DC
-------------------	--------------------	---	-------------------------

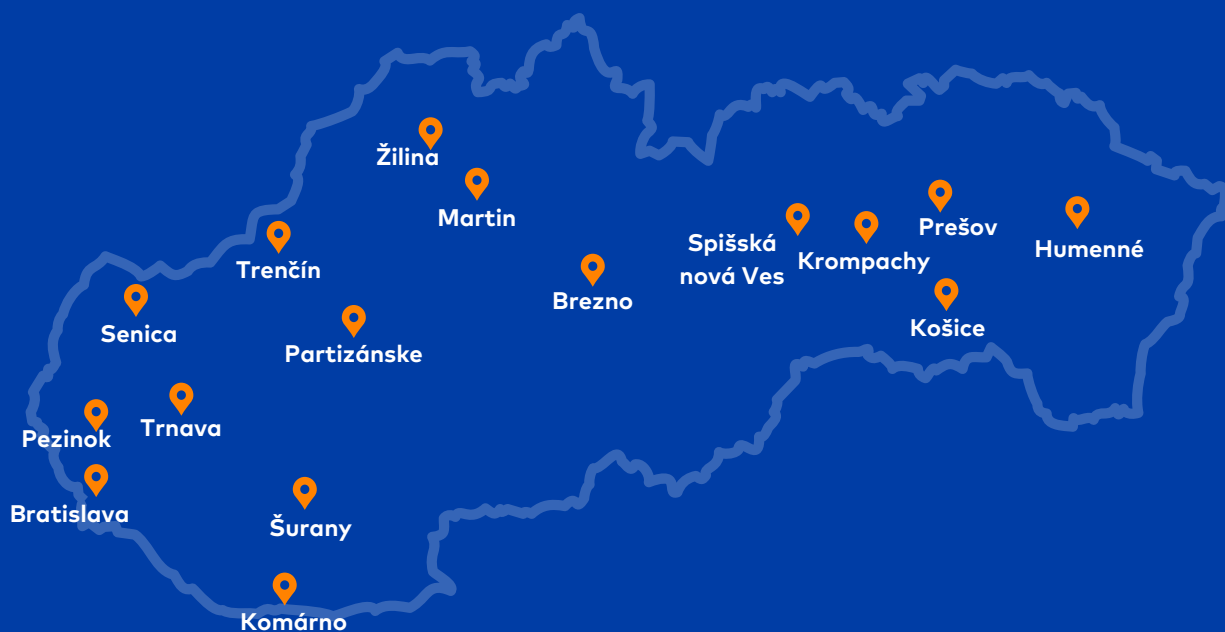
## Inter-Country Travel Grant

Natalia Rekhter	Healthcare Economics	Governors State University	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
-----------------	----------------------	----------------------------	---

The 2024–25 academic year marked a remarkable and celebratory chapter in the history of Fulbright Slovakia. It featured one of the most diverse and dynamic cohorts in recent memory. The year was defined by a rich array of academic, cultural, and community-building initiatives. Key highlights included the welcoming Orientation for the new cohort, the series of 30th-anniversary celebrations of the Fulbright Commission, the engaging Mid-Year Conference, the cross-border Media Literacy Seminar in Czechia, the first-ever Fulbright Talent Show, and the concluding Certificate Award Ceremony.

Each milestone reflected the vitality, collaboration, and creativity of the Fulbright community in Slovakia —making academic year **2024–25 an exceptional year of achievement and connection**. From classrooms and kitchens to marathons and concert halls, Fulbrighters across the country embodied the program’s values of curiosity, service, and collaboration—continuing to strengthen the enduring partnership between Slovakia and the United States.

Geographic distribution of the Fulbright cohort 2024-25:



As we look ahead, Fulbright Slovakia remains committed to fostering academic excellence, cross-cultural understanding, and meaningful impact in communities throughout the country. The accomplishments of this year’s grantees serve as a reminder of what is possible when people come together with purpose and openness. Their contributions will continue to resonate long after the academic year has ended, inspiring future cohorts and strengthening the Fulbright legacy in Slovakia for years to come.

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program in Slovakia achieved a major milestone, welcoming **15 ETAs—the largest cohort in the program’s history** since its launch in 2008. With Slovakia’s increased government allocation, priority has been given to expanding the ETA program, which has grown from 8 awards in 2020-21 to 15 awards in 2024–25.

ETAs are strategically placed across all eight Slovak regions, primarily outside major cities, where they teach in a diverse range of institutions—including grammar schools, vocational schools, and both public and religious schools.

The program continues to enjoy strong national demand, with over 140 applications from secondary schools received in the past two years. Interest from U.S. applicants is also steadily rising, underscoring the program’s growing reputation and impact.

The 2024–25 ETA cohort stood out for its strong sense of community, enthusiasm, and initiative. Beyond their work as classroom assistants, the ETAs became active contributors to local life—organizing reading clubs, celebrating holidays such as Thanksgiving, hosting workshops, attending local festivals, and joining school ski trips. Through these activities, they not only supported English language learning but also deepened cultural understanding between Slovakia and the United States.

### A Year of Engagement and Community

**William Smith**, an ETA based in Humenné, participated in the **100th Košice Peace Marathon**, the oldest continuously running marathon in the world. His determination and perseverance were cheered on by fellow ETAs who gathered to support him, reflecting the camaraderie and mutual encouragement that characterize the program.



In Komárno, students and teachers at the Secondary Vocational School of Trade and Services joined **Stuart Holton** in preparing an American–Hungarian Thanksgiving meal featuring roast turkey, pumpkin and pecan pie, and traditional sides.



The event beautifully combined culinary practice with cultural exchange, offering students hands-on learning about American customs while celebrating the diversity of both nations' cuisines.

## Enrichment Seminars for U.S. Students in Europe

A key professional development highlight of the year for American students is the series of enrichment seminars held across Europe, for which the Commission nominates its students each year.

The first, the **Media Literacy Seminar**, was hosted by the Czech Fulbright Commission in **Třešť** from **January 31 to February 2, 2025**. The seminar brought together Czech and Slovak ETAs, along with their program officers, for a weekend of interactive workshops, discussions, and networking. Beyond professional development, it helped strengthen personal and professional connections between Slovak and Czech Fulbrighters. Many ETAs visited each other's host communities afterward and have stayed in touch, continuing to collaborate informally.

**Zoe Golomb** and **Stuart Holton** took part in the Fulbright **Seminar on the European Union and NATO** in Luxembourg and Belgium on **25 February - 1 March 2025**, hosted by Fulbright Belgium.





**Sadie DeShon** traveled to Luxembourg to take part in the ETA enrichment seminar “**From ETA to Educator**” from **April 21–24, 2025**, also hosted by Fulbright Belgium.

*“The seminar sessions covered topics ranging from the multilingual Luxembourgish education system, to intercultural diplomacy, to current trends and strategies in EFL education — all of which I found especially informative and helpful! I was also so grateful for the opportunity to meet ETAs from all over Europe and for the privilege of ‘representing’ Slovakia among them.”*

## Mid-Year Conference

From **February 14–16, 2025**, the three-day conference for U.S. grantees has long been a space for reflection, learning, and team-building. Through interactive energizers, grantee presentations, and peer-to-peer discussions, participants explored ongoing challenges, shared ideas, and strengthened their sense of community. As part of the orientation program, we also welcomed two U.S. scholars joining the cohort for the Spring semester.

The setting of **Trenčianske Teplice** offered a welcoming backdrop, giving grantees the chance to recharge while engaging in meaningful conversations about their projects and experiences in Slovakia. The conference closed with renewed motivation, deeper connections, and a clear sense of shared purpose for the months ahead.



## The First-Ever Fulbright Slovakia National Talent Show

The year culminated in a truly joyful event—the Fulbright Slovakia National Talent Show at the historic **Pálffy Palace in Bratislava on May 17, 2025**. Fourteen ETAs and their students from schools across Slovakia had first organized local talent shows in their own communities, and the best performers then came together on the national stage. Over the course of the evening, 21 talented Slovak high-school students shared their music, theatre, rhetorical, and dance skills, filling the palace with energy, creativity, and pride.

This inspiring event was the brainchild of two of our remarkable ETAs, **William Smith** and **Henry Fox-Jurkowitz**, who came up with the idea shortly after arriving in Slovakia. What started as a bold concept quickly turned into reality thanks to their vision, enthusiasm, and teamwork, supported by Fulbright Slovakia, the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava, the International Women’s Club of Bratislava, the Slovak Fulbright Alumni Association, and Martinus.



The Talent Show was more than just a performance—it was a celebration of collaboration, creativity, and the bridges built through education and exchange. For students and ETAs alike, it captured the essence of Fulbright’s mission - to promote mutual understanding between people and cultures through shared experiences, learning, and friendship.

## English Teaching Assistants: A Year In Pictures





## Certificate Award Ceremony

The academic year came to a close with the Fulbright Slovakia annual Certificate Award Ceremony, graciously hosted by H.E. Ambassador Gautam Rana at his residence in Bratislava on May 16, 2025. Over the years, this gathering has become a cherished tradition for American and Slovak Fulbright grantees, their hosts and mentors, alumni, and friends of the Fulbright program—a moment to honor their achievements and reflect on the mutual understanding strengthened through the work of Fulbrighters in both Slovakia and the United States.



In the 2024–25 academic year, the Fulbright Commission welcomed two U.S. student researchers who combined academic work with cultural and community engagement.

**Meghan Udell**, hosted by the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, worked on her artistic research project, *“The Weight of Departure,”* in the field of crafts and material storytelling. She reimagined traditional Slovak embroidered textiles using contemporary symbols, blending heritage with modern expression. Beyond her studio work, Meghan connected with local beekeeping communities, bringing together her artistic interests and personal passion for sustainable craft and Slovak ecological traditions.



*“My Fulbright in Slovakia was a true gift. It offered a rare chance to immerse myself in research and to take my work in an entirely new direction. Access to primary source materials challenged my assumptions and reshaped how I think about narrative and cultural translation within my practice. The experience deepened my connection to Slovak traditions while allowing space to explore how they intersect with my own cultural references from the United States. Equally meaningful was the support of both the Slovak arts community and the Fulbright network, communities that fostered experimentation, dialogue, and friendships that continue to influence my work today.”*

**Bailey Kaufman**, based at the University of Prešov, conducted doctoral research on *“Teachers’ perceptions of integrating picture books into early childhood mathematics instruction”*. Beyond her doctoral research project, she made an extraordinary contribution to local communities by visiting and giving lectures to both primary and secondary schools across Slovakia, introducing creative learning approaches and fostering cross-cultural dialogue in classrooms. Bailey also joined *the EU–US Young Leaders Seminar in Belgium*, hosted by Fulbright Belgium from 6 - 8 May, 2025, where she engaged with peers from across Europe and the United States on shared democratic values and global challenges.



*“Attending the 2025 EU-US Young Leaders seminar, gave me the unique opportunity to connect with both Americans who have experienced time in the European Union and citizens devoted to furthering their education. In a beautiful melding of minds, we were able to collaboratively examine how the transatlantic partnership can continue as we move through an unprecedented time of global politics. Walking away from the seminar with new knowledge and new friends was a highlight in my year as a Fulbrighter in Slovakia.”*

The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program remains a cornerstone of academic and professional collaboration between the United States and Slovakia. In the 2024–2025 academic year, the Commission supported five U.S. Scholars placed at universities across regions of Slovakia. Their grants focused on teaching, research, or a combination of both, and represented diverse study fields—from philosophy and law to management and literature.

Through their work, Fulbright Scholars brought fresh perspectives to Slovak classrooms, fostered innovative research collaborations, and strengthened institutional partnerships.

### Program Highlights and Impact

#### Julie Felker – Advancing Student Engagement and Intercultural Competence

At the University of Prešov (UNIPO), Dr. Felker from the University of Michigan delivered 37 interactive seminars across twelve courses and four curricula, exploring topics such as motivation, cross-cultural communication, coaching, and preparation for international careers. She worked closely with students in management, business, marketing, and tourism programs, encouraging them to communicate confidently in English and to apply practical skills needed in a global workplace.

Beyond her teaching, Dr. Felker launched a long-term partnership with UNIPO faculty, co-authoring a paper on design thinking and joining the KEGA-funded project (No. 005PU-4/2024) focused on developing intercultural communicative competence among future managers. Her collaboration will continue through 2026, supporting faculty development and strengthening curriculum innovation.



*“My stay at the (UNIPO) was an inspiring and deeply meaningful experience. Engaging with students and professors broadened my perspectives and strengthened my appreciation for international academic and cultural collaboration. I especially appreciated the openness and dedication of both students and faculty, which created an environment of genuine exchange and mutual learning. This experience deepened my personal connection to Slovakia and its people. I am truly grateful for the support that made my time at UNIPO so memorable, and for the incredible opportunity made possible through the Fulbright Scholar Program.”*

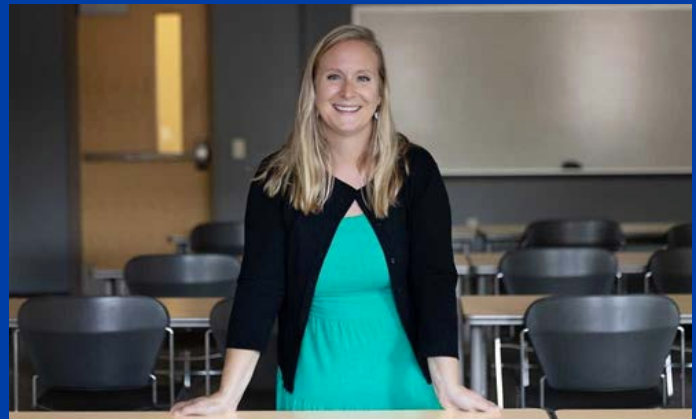
## Nicole Gullekson – Living Global Leadership and Building Long-Term Partnerships

During the Spring semester, Nicole Gullekson, Professor of Management at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse (UWL), served as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar at the Bratislava University of Economics and Business (EUBA). Her multifaceted project combined teaching, research, and partnership development, focusing on global leadership, consulting, and faculty development.

Building on more than a decade of collaboration between UWL and EUBA, prof. Gullekson deepened institutional and industry ties that now provide new learning opportunities for Slovak and U.S. students and faculty. She worked with EUBA's Department of Management Coaching Center, supported faculty development in international pedagogies, served on university committees, and helped advance curriculum and partnership goals aligned with global leadership education.

Her research examined global leadership practices and barriers to women's leadership in both Slovakia and the U.S., including the impact of extended parental leave on career advancement. These findings are laying the groundwork for continued joint research with Dr. Katarína Procházková from EUBA, who is a Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence (S-I-R) alumna of 2022-23 herself.

*"In my capacity as a Fulbright Scholar, I was able to experience firsthand what I teach students about — what it is like to live and work in another country," she reflected. "I am coming back with countless real-world examples for the classroom and a larger network of business professionals who are also on international assignments."*



Watch an interview about her time at Comenius University: [YouTube Video](#)

## Karen Sandrik Ross

Professor **Sandrik Ross** spent the Summer semester at the Faculty of Law, Comenius University in Bratislava. During her Fulbright stay, she taught and engaged with faculty and students at the Institute of Information Technology Law and Intellectual Property Law.

Professor Sandrik's research focuses on the intersection of patent and commercial law.

# Fulbright Brochure for U.S. Scholars, ETAs, Students, and Specialists

The Commission prepared a new recruitment brochure to encourage more U.S. applicants across all program categories. The brochure highlights Slovakia as an exciting Fulbright destination and shares key information about the program’s 30+ year history, the Slovak higher education system, research and innovation strengths, potential host institutions, and available Fulbright opportunities. It also features testimonials from U.S. alumni, including those who came with their families.

The design was created in collaboration with our Fulbright alumna **Mária Čorejová**. Both printed and digital versions are now available to partners.

**FULBRIGHT Slovakia**

Fulbright Program in Slovakia:  
**A Gateway to Discovery in Central Europe**

**30+** Years of Academic Exchange and Impact

472 U.S. Alumni  
50+ Fulbright U.S. Students  
150+ English Teaching Assistants  
70+ Fulbright Specialists  
170+ Fulbright U.S. Scholars

immerse  
inspire  
engage

### Spotlight on Innovation

#### Comenius University Science Park for Innovation and Interdisciplinary Research

The Science Park of Comenius University in Bratislava is located at Slovakia's oldest and most prestigious university. Established with support from the European Union and the Slovak government, the park serves as a vital platform for advancing scientific discovery, technology transfer, and international collaboration. The Science Park supports **interdisciplinary research and applied innovation** in high-priority fields, such as **biomedicine, environmental medicine and biotechnology**.

Its mission is to bridge academic research and industry, transforming scientific knowledge into practical solutions for societal and economic challenges—locally and globally.

The park houses **modern lab infrastructure, core research facilities, and startup incubators**, enabling researchers to pursue advanced experimentation, data analysis, and prototype development. Multidisciplinary teams of **scientists, doctoral students, and engineers** work together across departments, fostering an environment of creativity and knowledge exchange.

### Slovakia in Figures:

- Population:** 5.4 mil. (similar to Minnesota or South Carolina)
- Area:** 19,000 sq miles (roughly equal to Vermont and New Hampshire combined)
- Capital:** Bratislava
- Official Language:** Slovak
- Government:** Parliamentary democracy
- Membership:** EU – Eurozone & Schengen Area, NATO, UN, OECD, WHO
- Currency:** Euro (EUR)
- GDP:** approx. 132.9 billion USD (2023)
- Average Gross Monthly Salary:** €1,545 (2024)

#### Did You Know?

- Car Production per Capita**  
Slovakia produces more cars per person than any other country in the world. With a population of just over 5 million, it manufactures over 1 million vehicles annually.
- Castles per Capita**  
While exact rankings vary, Slovakia is often cited among the top countries in the world for castles per capita, with over 100 preserved castles and many more ruins — remarkable for its size.
- High Tatras' Caves and Biodiversity**  
Slovakia's Dobšiná Ice Cave was the first ice cave in Europe to be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It's one of the world's oldest known ice caves open to the public.

**Michael Starek**, one of the six U.S. Marines in the iconic Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima photograph, was born in Jarabina, Slovakia. He immigrated to the U.S. as a child and became a decorated Marine sergeant — a powerful symbol of the Slovak-American connection.

The Fulbright Specialist Program provides short-term assignments of two to six weeks for experienced U.S. academics and professionals to support Slovak higher education institutions, NGOs, cultural organizations, or government bodies. Specialists assist in areas such as curriculum development, faculty training, strategic planning, and institutional innovation based on a cost-share basis.

In the 2024–25 academic year, five Slovak institutions hosted Specialists, including three fully-funded projects by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State. These engagements highlight the program’s focus on partnership, capacity-building, and lasting impact.

### **Jennifer Harrison - Expanding Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities**

In January 2025, Jennifer Harrison, an expert in behavioral health and rehabilitation counseling, spent two weeks in Slovakia to introduce Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-based counseling approach supporting greater workforce participation among people with disabilities. The project was hosted by KOGNEO and Profesia Lab, a program developed under the leadership of [Anna Podlesná](#), Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Profesia (Alma Career Slovakia) and [alumna of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship in the 2021-22 academic year](#).

Building on Ms. Podlesná Humphrey experience at Michigan State University, this collaboration continues to bring U.S. expertise and best practices to Slovakia in the field of vocational rehabilitation. Under Podlesná’s leadership, Profesia has earned several national recognitions for advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including Via Bona Slovakia (2019), the National Career Award (2021), and the Impact Award (2022).

During her stay, Ms. Harrison delivered a keynote address at the Profesia Lab Conference 2025 and conducted training sessions in Bratislava and Košice for employment counselors and employers. The collaboration resulted in a new Slovak-language publication, *Nevyužité talenty* (“Untapped Talents”), co-authored by Harrison, Podlesná, and partners, which provides practical tools for applying MI methods in counseling and workforce development.



Read the publication: [Nevyužité talenty](#)



**Profesia Lab** project epitomizes the lasting impact of Fulbright and Humphrey alumni in Slovakia—fostering inclusive employment, advancing professional excellence, and strengthening sustainable U.S.–Slovak partnerships. Through shared expertise and collaboration, the Fulbright Program continues to generate meaningful, long-term benefits for both nations.

### **Maully Shah – Advancing Pediatric Cardiology Excellence**

In October 2024, a world-renowned pediatric cardiologist and electrophysiologist Professor Maully Shah visited Children’s Cardiac Center (CHCC) in Bratislava to share her expertise in diagnosing and treating complex cardiac arrhythmias in children. During her stay, she collaborated closely with Slovak cardiologists and electrophysiologists on challenging clinical cases, including life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias, and provided hands-on consultation in advanced mapping and ablation procedures.

Professor Shah also met with medical staff and trainees to discuss best practices in pediatric cardiac care, long-term rhythm management, and innovation in electrophysiology. Her visit significantly strengthened professional ties between CHCC and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, supporting CHCC’s development as a regional center of excellence in pediatric heart rhythm care.

The visit received national media attention through an interview broadcast on TV JOJ, which highlighted the importance of international medical collaboration and helped raise public awareness about advances in pediatric cardiology in Slovakia.



Watch the interview: [TV JOJ News](#)

In the 2024–25 academic year, three Slovak doctoral students embarked on an exciting journey as visiting researchers at U.S. universities with projects in architecture, physics, and biomedical engineering, showcasing the variety of fields Fulbright programs support.

**Mária Novotná** pursued research at the University of Colorado Denver on the relationship between architecture, landscape, and history in Alpine environments. Her work combined field studies, historical research, and interdisciplinary analysis, with plans for an academic paper and lecture presentation.

**Dávid Hovančík** carried out research at the University of Washington focused on layered two-dimensional materials and the fabrication of magnetic tunnel junctions. His project contributes to the development of probabilistic logic circuits, and collaboration with his U.S. host lab continues beyond his Fulbright stay.



Mária and Dávid on a short-term English program at the American English Institute, University of Oregon, on the left. In Seattle, on the right.



**Michaela Vojníková** conducted research at UC San Diego in Professor Joseph Wang’s lab, working on innovative “lipobots”, lipid-based nanoparticles designed to enhance cancer drug delivery. Her project expanded into new disease applications and is expected to yield multiple scientific publications and future collaborations.

She is also actively engaged in science outreach, inspiring young women to pursue STEM careers. Michaela’s accomplishments exemplify the impact of Fulbright Slovakia in supporting outstanding researchers and promoting international exchange.



Michaela has been recognized in the prestigious **Forbes Slovensko 30 Under 30 list**.

A Ph.D. student in nanoscience at CEITEC – Central European Institute of Technology and a researcher at Mendel University in Brno has several honors and awards, including Brno Ph.D. Talent, the Tatra Banka Foundation Award, and recognition as a Falling Walls Lab Winner.

In the 2024–25 academic year, the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia supported a distinguished cohort of Slovak scholars whose research scholarships in the U.S. reflect the Commission's commitment to advancing knowledge, strengthening institutional ties and contributing to societal benefit. These scholars engage in fields ranging from psychology and genomics to behavioral economics and education, and in doing so, enhance Slovakia's academic capacity while building bridges with U.S. institutions.

### Alexandra Kolenová

Professor Kolenová, Head of the Clinic of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology at the National Institute of Children's Diseases and Comenius University in Bratislava - spent her Fulbright research stay at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In 2024, she was **recognized by Forbes Slovakia among Top 75 Personalities in Medicine (Top 75 Osobností Medicíny)**.

During her stay, Professor Kolenová concentrated on advancing genomics-based diagnostics and novel treatment approaches for children with cancer, and on translating these innovations into Slovak clinical practice. She emphasises the importance of transparent communication with families, and notes that children's treatment centres in the U.S. combine clinical care and research in highly integrated models — insights she plans to adapt in Slovakia.



In addition to her research, Professor Kolenová kept weekly updates via her **"Denník z Ameriky"** (Journal from the U.S.), sharing reflections, lessons, and inspirations from her stay — contributing to a broader understanding in Slovakia about what can be improved in pediatric oncology and family support systems.

Her work continues to strengthen Slovak-U.S. institutional ties, supports modernization of pediatric oncology in Slovakia, and highlights the value of cross-border research and clinical exchange in raising standards of care.

## Anna Slatinská

Associate Professor Anna Slatinská from Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica spent her Fulbright grant at **Boise State University**. Her research focuses on how diaspora communities can enrich education, cultural exchange, and institutional development.

During her stay, she examined U.S. models of diaspora engagement and international education, collaborating with the Idaho Museum of International Diaspora and the Global Leadership Council to identify strategies for strengthening global competencies in teacher education and curriculum design.

Her Fulbright experience builds on a long-term efforts to link Slovak and international educators through joint research, conferences, and publications, including the project *Global Cultures: Engaging Diasporas Around the World in Diverse Contexts* and continues institutional cooperation between Matej Bel and Boise State Universities.

She continues to work closely with the Fulbright alumna Zuzana Tomaš from Eastern Michigan University, co-hosting virtual exchanges that connect Slovak and U.S. students. Together, they expanded the annual International Conference for Preservice English Teachers (ICPET) and developed online English language learning opportunities for Slovak and Ukrainian secondary school students — initiatives that demonstrate the lasting impact of Fulbright partnership.

In 2025, Anna Slatinská received the **National Scientist of the Year award - Vedec roka SR 2024** in the category “Personality of International Cooperation”, recognizing her leadership in fostering innovative academic collaboration and preparing future educators for work in global and multicultural contexts.

By embedding global perspectives in Slovak higher education and nurturing enduring academic partnerships, her work supports the modernization and internationalization of teacher education in Slovakia.



**Erika Čvirik Karpáty** from Stredná zdravotnícka škola in Nové Zámky and **Dana Mikulová** from Gymnázium Leonarda Stockela in Bardejov participated in the 2024–25 Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (FTEA) Program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as part of the Media Literacy Cohort.

The cohort focused primarily on media literacy, offering participants innovative teaching strategies, hands-on workshops, and collaborative learning experiences with educators who share a strong commitment to advancing education. During the program, both Slovak participants completed 40 hours of practical engagement at partner schools, gaining first-hand experience in diverse classroom environments.



Interview with Dana Mikulová talking about FTEA program in local media: [Ahoj Bardejov](#).

The FTEA program emphasizes trust-based teacher–student relationships, reflective thinking, and practical knowledge rather than formal assessments. Many of the approaches and methods learned were immediately integrated into their teaching in Slovakia, including the use of new educational tools and programs.

Participation in the FTEA Media Literacy Cohort has also fostered lasting professional connections. The participants continue to collaborate regularly via Zoom, plan future visits, and engage in additional joint initiatives. The program has shown that with an open and engaged approach, FTEA educators can make a meaningful and lasting impact on teaching practices in their home countries.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship is a prestigious professional development program for mid-career professionals with strong leadership potential across a variety of fields.

**Zuzana Pavlíčková**, Head of Policy and International Relations at the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, joined the 2024–2025 cohort at the American University Washington College of Law.

With over 12 years of experience in human rights law, policy, and advocacy, Zuzana focused her fellowship on strategic litigation and using legal tools to support social advancement and equal opportunities, especially in communities facing resistance to change.

During the program, she gained hands-on experience with the Impact Litigation project, explored the Inter-American human rights system, and shared Slovakia's legal and cultural context in fellowship seminars. Zuzana contributed to discussions on human rights challenges at home while developing expertise in strategic case selection and international advocacy. The fellowship also allowed her to build lasting professional connections, supporting ongoing collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Washington, extended through December 2025.

Her experience highlights the program's role in strengthening leadership, global engagement, and practical human rights skills among Slovak professionals.

## 4. NON-FULBRIGHT PROGRAMS

### **Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSIs)**

During the reporting period, two candidates from Slovakia were nominated for the Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSIs), a U.S. Department of State's program designed to give scholars and professionals a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions.

One candidate was nominated for the SUSI on U.S. Economics and Sustainable Development, and the other for the SUSI on U.S. Foreign Policy.

Both were accepted into the program, but ultimately, neither was able to participate, as they had to decline for personal reasons.

The Study Abroad Engagement Grant, **“Building Transatlantic Exchange Capacities for Slovak Higher Education Institutions,”** aimed to strengthen the ability of Slovak higher education institutions (HEIs) to host more U.S. students and to foster sustainable transatlantic partnerships. Its overarching goal was to build institutional readiness and capacity to enhance international collaboration and to promote Slovakia as an attractive destination for study abroad programs.

Implemented in two phases, the initiative brought together Slovak and U.S. higher education experts to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and develop strategies for effective international cooperation.

The project began with an online seminar, “U.S. Higher Education System: Landscape and Governance Structures,” led by **Dr. Asabe Poloma from Brown University in Rhode Island** and **Dr. Gonzalo Bruce from Boise State University in Idaho**. More than 30 representatives from Slovak universities participated, gaining valuable insights into the structure of U.S. higher education and exploring opportunities for partnership and student mobility.

Building on this foundation, two in-person workshops were held in Košice and Bratislava, engaging nearly **40 participants from 13 Slovak universities** as well as key educational stakeholders. These sessions focused on internationalization strategies, program design, and student-centered mobility, encouraging hands-on learning, institutional reflection, and cross-university networking.



On September 22, 2024, the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia proudly celebrated its 30th anniversary, marking three decades of advancing mutual understanding, educational exchange, and U.S.–Slovak cooperation.

The milestone was honored through a series of three celebratory events held in Bratislava, Košice, and Washington, D.C., each reflecting the program’s enduring impact and the strength of its community and partnerships.

### **Gala Evening at the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava - October 8, 2024**

The anniversary celebrations began with a gala event at the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, uniting Fulbright alumni, grantees, institutional partners, and friends of Fulbright Slovakia.

Distinguished guests included H.E. Gautam Rana, U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia; H.E. Radovan Javorčík, then Slovak Ambassador to the United States; Ábel Ravasz, Fulbright alum representing the Slovak Ministry of Education, Research, Development, and Youth; and Michal Mlynár, a distinguished Fulbright alum and then Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

The evening featured a rich cultural and artistic program, including a photography exhibition by Fulbright alumna Olja Triaška Stefanović, visual design by Fulbright alumna Mária Čorejová, and a performance by For You Acapella. The gala was both a celebration and reflection on three decades of successful transatlantic collaboration.



## Panel Discussion and Reception in Košice - November 21, 2024

The celebrations continued in Košice, where current U.S. Fulbright grantees joined Slovak alumni and partners from Eastern Slovakia for an intimate regional gathering.

Hosted with the support of Vice-Rector Slávka Tomaščíková and the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Košice, the event provided a warm and engaging platform for exchange.

Highlights included alumni talks by **Alena Vachnová** and **Šimon Mackovjak**, followed by a panel discussion featuring **Július Rozenfeld**, **Norbert Kopčo**, **Julie Felker**, and **Silvia Rosivalová Baučeková**.

The evening underscored the importance of community, connection, and continued collaboration within the Fulbright network. Participants expressed a shared commitment to creating more frequent opportunities for alumni engagement and professional exchange in the region.



## Closing Reception in Washington, D.C. - December 6, 2024

The 30th anniversary celebrations concluded in Washington, D.C., with a special reception **hosted by H.E. Ambassador Radovan Javorčík** at the Slovak Embassy. The intimate reception brought together U.S. alumni and grantees from across the U.S. - New York City, Boston, Charlottesville, Seattle, Denver, and San Diego, alongside our partners from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The reception was a perfect conclusion to the anniversary year—celebrating the lasting impact of the Fulbright experience and the deep bonds between Slovakia and the United States. A special moment came with the presence of **former U.S. Ambassador Ted Russell**, who signed the original agreement establishing the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia back in 1994, reminding guests of the program's enduring legacy and shared history.

The celebrations throughout the year captured the spirit, impact, and future promise of Fulbright Slovakia. As Fulbright Slovakia enters its next decade, it remains committed to expanding opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and exchange—continuing to build bridges between people, institutions, and cultures across the Atlantic.



## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Social Media Campaign

In addition to hosting in-person events, the Commission launched the **"This Is Us"** social media campaign, showcasing **30 alumni testimonials** that highlighted the experiences and impact of both U.S. and Slovak participants across all Fulbright programs.



This is **us...**



Kristína Bosáková

"The wonderful diversity in the U.S. academic and non-academic environments, polite behavior, and tolerance on one hand, but also the courage to speak up when necessary on the other; the gratitude of my U.S. colleagues for the constructive critique of their work; it was truly eye-opening."<sup>33</sup>



This is **us...**



Kristína Bosáková

"Stepping out of your comfort zone is necessary for becoming a better person. Don't be afraid to do it."<sup>34</sup>



This is **us...**

"Fulbright has helped me to become more concentrated on my professional aims, to trust more in my work and in my capacity to solve problems even in very different environments. I became more aware of the things that we have in common instead of focusing on the differences."<sup>35</sup>

This is Fulbright

Encouraging  
Life-Changing  
Empowering



Celebrating  
30 years of partnership  
in the Fulbright Program

## Humphrey Alumni Global Policy Dialogue

The first regional Humphrey Alumni Global Policy Dialogue (GPD) supported by the Humphrey Alumni Grant—under the theme, “**Building a Resilient Future in Central and Eastern Europe**”, was held in Bratislava on September 24 and 25, 2024.

The GPD brought together 28 Humphrey alumni from 11 countries across Central and Eastern Europe - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, marking a milestone in regional cooperation and alumni engagement.

The event successfully fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and exchange, with every participant contributing as a moderator or panelist, ensuring an inclusive and dynamic dialogue. The discussions focused on strengthening democratic governance, social resilience, and civic engagement - key priorities for building a sustainable future in the CEE region.

Through five thematic panels, alumni shared practical insights and policy recommendations:

- **Strengthening Civil Society through NGO Work** underscored the stabilizing role of NGOs in promoting democracy, civic participation, and crisis response, particularly during the war in Ukraine.
- **Social and Economic Development for Talent Retention** highlighted quality of life, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship as crucial factors for keeping talent in the region.
- **Rule of Law and Trust in Democratic Institutions** emphasized transparent governance and business integrity as the foundation for public trust and economic stability.
- **Media as a Watchdog of Democracy** explored media independence, ownership transparency, and digital engagement as tools to counter disinformation and strengthen civic oversight.
- **Educational Reform to Keep Talents at Home** called for modern, skills-based education and stronger research ecosystems. As part of this panel, a representative of VAIA presented Slovakia’s national strategy for building a knowledge-based economy and engaging returning professionals.

The Global Policy Dialogue concluded with a strong call to enhance regional collaboration through cross-border partnerships, alumni networks, and external grant programs.

It reaffirmed the Humphrey Program’s impact as a platform for sustained professional cooperation and knowledge-sharing, empowering alumni to jointly address challenges such as talent retention, democratic resilience, and inclusive growth across Central and Eastern Europe.



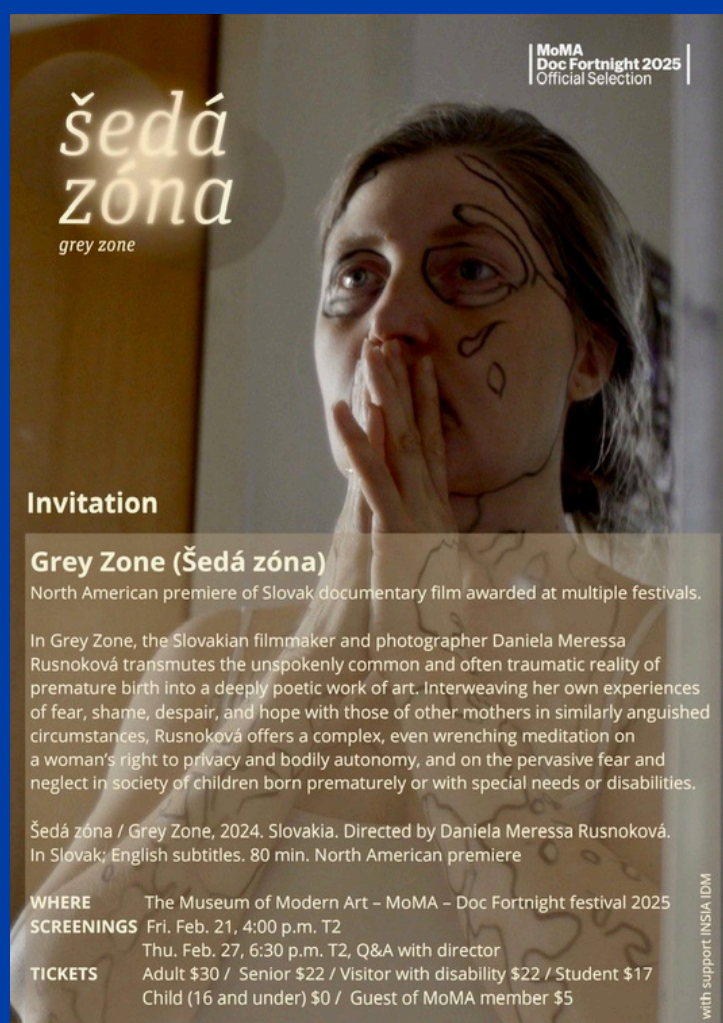
### **“Šedá Zóna/Grey Zone”: Awarded Documentary by Daniela Meressa Rusnoková**

Fulbright alumna **Daniela Meressa Rusnoková** has reached an incredible milestone—her documentary *Šedá zóna/Grey zone* has been **officially selected for Documentary Fortnight 2025 at MoMA The Museum of Modern Art in New York City!**

During her Fulbright stay at Syracuse University (2021–22), Daniela conducted extensive research for the film, working with major U.S. archival and library resources such as the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine and others. These materials helped her shape the film’s creative direction and provided essential visual sources for her documentary work. She also continued to develop the project through collaborative editing sessions and ongoing creative consultations.

The Commission was honored to attend the screening of *Šedá zóna* at Kino Lumière in Bratislava on October 24, 2024, during the One World Documentary Festival, and later the “Film Evening: *Šedá zóna*” event organized by the Slovak Fulbright Alumni Association (SFAA) on April 29, 2025.

The film, which won the **Best V4 Documentary Award at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival and IGRIC 2025 for Best Direction in a Documentary Film** has resonated deeply with audiences for its humanistic approach and artistic integrity. In the film’s closing credits, the director expressed her gratitude to the Fulbright Commission in Slovakia, among others.



MoMA  
Doc Fortnight 2025  
Official Selection

šedá  
zóna  
grey zone

**Invitation**

**Grey Zone (Šedá zóna)**  
North American premiere of Slovak documentary film awarded at multiple festivals.

In *Grey Zone*, the Slovakian filmmaker and photographer Daniela Meressa Rusnoková transmutes the unspokenly common and often traumatic reality of premature birth into a deeply poetic work of art. Interweaving her own experiences of fear, shame, despair, and hope with those of other mothers in similarly anguished circumstances, Rusnoková offers a complex, even wrenching meditation on a woman’s right to privacy and bodily autonomy, and on the pervasive fear and neglect in society of children born prematurely or with special needs or disabilities.

Šedá zóna / Grey Zone, 2024. Slovakia. Directed by Daniela Meressa Rusnoková. In Slovak; English subtitles. 80 min. North American premiere

**WHERE** The Museum of Modern Art – MoMA – Doc Fortnight festival 2025  
**SCREENINGS** Fri. Feb. 21, 4:00 p.m. T2  
Thu. Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m. T2, Q&A with director  
**TICKETS** Adult \$30 / Senior \$22 / Visitor with disability \$22 / Student \$17  
Child (16 and under) \$0 / Guest of MoMA member \$5

with support INSA IDM



## “Drawings...and Contents”: Exhibition by Mária Čorejová

In March 2024, Fulbright alumna **Mária Čorejová** presented her exhibition “**Drawings...and Contents**” at the Staromestská galéria Zichy in Bratislava. The exhibition offered a compelling artistic reflection on contemporary social and political issues, with a particular focus on the relationship between humanity and nature, both its beauty and the consequences of its destruction.

The event provided an inspiring opportunity to engage with Mária’s thought-provoking work while also reconnecting Fulbright alumni and current U.S. grantees in an atmosphere of creativity and dialogue.



### Peter Stec - Virginia Architecture Fellow

Peter Stec, a Fulbright alum, architect and researcher, served as a Virginia Architecture Fellow at the [University of Virginia School of Architecture](#) from Fall 2023 through Spring 2025, where his project “[Tracing Lineages: On Architectural Typologies and Spatial Networks](#)” advanced his investigation into how architectural types and campus landscapes encode patterns of knowledge and movement.

Meanwhile, Peter Stec’s practice continues to win recognition in Slovakia. His studio was involved in a project nominated for the prestigious CE ZA AR (Cena za architektúru) award in 2025, confirming his active contribution to architecture in his home country.

Stec’s dual engagement, scholarly research in the U.S. and applied architecture in Slovakia, mirrors the mission of academic exchange - generating new insights abroad and bringing those ideas back to national practice, strengthening institutional ties and enriching the architectural discourse in both contexts.

### Robert N. Thomas - Fulbright Specialist from Georgia Tech

In 2025, Professor Thomas from Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) continued his engagement with the Technical University of Košice (TUKE), building on his five-week Fulbright Specialist project in 2024, during which he introduced the [Peace Engineering concept](#) and helped establish cooperation between TUKE, Uzhorod National University, the Carpathian Foundation, Habitat for Humanity Europe, and regional business and academic stakeholders. His 2024 work also contributed to stronger cooperation between TUKE and Uzhorod National University, as well as signing the Memorandum of Understanding between TUKE and Georgia Tech.

Throughout 2025, Professor Thomas remained actively involved through follow-up consultations and international coordination, and continued supporting TUKE's emerging Peace Engineering initiative.

His ongoing collaboration included participation in an online meeting hosted by TUKE focused on a leadership, social impact, and Peace Engineering re-development model for Ukraine, as well as subsequent Peace Engineering workshop co-organized by TUKE, Uzhorod National University, Drexel University, Georgia Tech, and the Ulysseus European University.

These activities further strengthened TUKE's efforts to position itself as a regional leader in Peace Engineering in Central Europe.



Visit the link to read more: [Interview with Professor Thomas](#)

In 2024, the EducationUSA Advising Center in Slovakia continued to expand its impact through a combination of online and in-person advising, reaching students nationwide.

The EdUSA played a crucial role in connecting Slovak students with opportunities to study in the United States, explaining the admission process to U.S. higher education institutions, providing guidance on short-term summer school programs, and helping students identify scholarship opportunities.

Key highlights included an advising session at the American Center in Košice on November 21, 2024, co-hosted by **EdUSA adviser Silvia Miadoková and Cultural Affairs Officer Ben Cohen** from the U.S. Embassy Bratislava. The event provided valuable insights into U.S. higher education and scholarship opportunities for students in Eastern Slovakia.

Additionally, Silvia conducted numerous outreach presentations at high schools across the country, participated in the Spring Central Europe Tour at the British International School in Bratislava, and led a sports-focused advising session at Stredná športová škola in Nitra in cooperation with Sporegy Futures (now US Futures), emphasizing athletic pathways to U.S. universities.

Advising Session at the American Center in Košice



### EdUSA Adviser Award for the Europe and Eurasia Region

In recognition of her contributions, **Silvia Miadoková, the only EducationUSA Adviser in Slovakia, received the 2024 EducationUSA Adviser Award for the Europe and Eurasia Region**, presented by the U.S. Department of State. The award celebrates her innovation, leadership, and dedication in promoting U.S. higher education and fostering transatlantic academic exchange. Her initiatives, such as integrating Fulbright English Teaching Assistants into outreach activities and expanding EducationUSA's online presence, have significantly increased visibility and engagement, doubling the center's reach on social media.

## San Antonio Campus Visits – EducationUSA Advisor Program

Silvia participated in a professional exchange organized by the City of San Antonio’s Global Engagement Office and the U.S. Department of State’s EducationUSA network. The week-long program from May 31 - June 5, 2025 gathered EducationUSA advisers from Slovakia, Hungary, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Cabo Verde, and the Eurasia region to strengthen connections between U.S. higher education institutions and EducationUSA centers abroad.



During the visit, the delegation was welcomed by representatives of eight HEIs. Each institution provided valuable insights into its academic programs, student life, and internationalization efforts. The institutions showcased a wide range of academic strengths, from **Our Lady of the Lake University’s** strong community engagement and welcoming international office, to **St. Mary’s** focus on business, law, and student-athletes. **The Alamo Colleges District** emphasized accessibility and transfer pathways for diverse learners, while **Trinity University** stood out for its small class sizes and research opportunities. **University of the Incarnate Word** highlighted global engagement and programs in health sciences and business, **University of Texas at San Antonio** impressed with its modern research facilities, **Texas A&M University–San Antonio** demonstrated strong ties to local industries, and the **Culinary Institute of America** offered hands-on culinary and hospitality training.

By connecting personally with admissions counselors, faculty, and international students, Silvia built relationships that will support future collaboration and enable more tailored advising for Slovak students. The insights she gained about scholarships, athletic and research opportunities, and student support services will directly strengthen the promotion of U.S. higher education in Slovakia.



## The Regional Manager (REAC) Site Visit to EducationUSA Slovakia

From August 19 to 21, 2025, the EducationUSA center located within the Fulbright Office welcomed REAC Charles Hornstra for a formal site visit.

Throughout the visit, we had the opportunity to discuss our advising operations in detail, reflect on achievements from the past year, and set priorities for the year ahead. In conversations with adviser Silvia Miadoková, Charles Hornstra reviewed advising practices, examined outreach and student-engagement strategies, and explored practical ways to increase the center's visibility and impact. He also met with ED Lýdia Tobiášová to discuss long-term strategic planning, adviser professional development, priority areas for EducationUSA outreach, and opportunities to align the center's activities with Commission goals.

Furthermore, Mr. Hornstra met with representatives of the Slovak University of Technology - International Relations Office. Together, we explored opportunities for stronger cooperation between U.S. and Slovak institutions, discussed student mobility trends, and identified ways in which EducationUSA can help facilitate future partnerships.

Afterwards, he met with a colleague from the U.S. Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section to discuss current collaboration, emerging needs, and shared priorities. Later, we connected virtually with advisers from the EducationUSA reference centers in Banská Bystrica and Košice for a monitoring call, ensuring that their experiences and regional insights were fully reflected in the overall review. The visit brought useful feedback for the adviser and helped clarify next steps for strengthening the center's work.



## Annual Executive Director's Meeting - Reykjavík, Iceland

On April 1 - 4, 2025, European Executive Directors of Fulbright commissions gathered in Reykjavík for the Annual Executive Directors Meeting, hosted by Fulbright Iceland.

The meeting provided a platform to discuss developments in the Fulbright Program, address shared challenges, exchange best practices, and explore emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, leadership, and bi-nationalism—a core principle of the Fulbright Program's operation.

A special session with Geir H. Haarde, former Prime Minister of Iceland and current Fulbright Iceland Board member, was a key highlight.

The meeting also included participation from representatives of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, further enriching discussions and fostering collaboration among Fulbright commissions.



## NAFSA 2025 Annual Conference & Expo - San Diego, California

Executive Director Lýdia Tobiášová and Program Officer Silvia Miadoková represented Fulbright Slovakia and EducationUSA Slovakia at the NAFSA 2025 Annual Conference & Expo in San Diego from May 27-30, 2025 - the world's largest association dedicated to international education and exchange.

The conference provided valuable opportunities to strengthen institutional partnerships, exchange best practices, and deepen collaboration within the Fulbright and EducationUSA networks. A particularly impactful session addressed recent U.S. visa changes, the application of AI in education marketing, and emerging partnership models. The insights gained from these and other sessions will inform advising practices, support Slovak applicants more effectively, and contribute to Fulbright Slovakia's ongoing efforts to enhance educational exchange and mutual understanding.



## NAFA Biennial Conference - Washington, D.C.

Executive Director Lýdia Tobiášová participated for the first time in the National Association of Fellowship Advisors (NAFA) Biennial Conference, themed “25 in 2025: Reflecting on NAFA’s First Twenty-Five Years and Looking Ahead to the Future.”, held in Washington, D.C. from July 8 - 11, 2025.

The NAFA is a U.S.-based professional association supporting advisors and administrators of fellowship programs and awards and its purpose is to promote educational, ethical, and equitable fellowships practices.

The biennial conference offered opportunities to connect with fellowship advisors from across the United States, exchange best practices, and gain insights into the administration of fellowship programs. ED Lýdia Tobiášová joined colleagues from Fulbright Hungary, Bulgaria, and Austria on a panel discussing in-country selection processes and regional perspectives.



FISCAL YEAR 25	INCOME (USD)	EXPENSES (USD)
<b>Government Allocations</b>		
U.S. Government Base Allocation	403 000	364 644
U.S. Government End-of-Year Funds	104 000	0
Slovak Government Base Allocation	411 170	410 517
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>918 170</b>	<b>775 161</b>
<b>In-Kind Contributions</b>		
Fulbright Specialist Program	39 939	0
U.S. Embassy Contribution	1 690	0
Proshek-Fulbright Award	44 904	0
Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship	77 619	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>164 152</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surplus Funds</b>		
Program U.S. Government Surplus Funds	287 856	0
Non-Grant Program U.S. Government Surplus Funds	15 830	14 106
Administrative U.S. Government Surplus Funds	93 586	21 567
End-of-Year Funds	71 000	21 000
Severance Fund	33 090	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>501 362</b>	<b>56 673</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 583 684</b>	<b>831 834</b>

Exchange rate 1 EUR = 1,1741 USD as of September 30, 2025.

## NOTES:

### **U.S. Government Base Allocation Expenses primarily cover:**

- Program Expenses for 7 US/SK Grantees and Health Insurance Allowance for 2 Proshek-Fulbright Award Recipients;
- Non-Grant Program Activities such as Enrichment Events for US Grantees and Fulbright Outreach;
- Standard Administrative Expenses for Personnel Compensation and Benefits, Commission Travel, Representation, Contractual Services, etc.

### **Slovak Government Base Allocation may be spent until 30th June, 2026.**

### **Slovak Government Base Allocation Expenses primarily cover:**

- Program Expenses for 21 US/SK Grantees and Flight Tickets for Slovak Grantees;
- Administrative Expenses for Rent, Utilities and Maintenance, and Communication Services.

### **Administrative U.S. Government Surplus Funds Expenses primarily cover:**

- Audit of the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements FY24, Additional expenses for Commission Office Relocation, Commission Travel, Representation, Office Automation, Contractual Services, etc.

### **Non-Grant Program U.S. Government Surplus Funds Expenses primarily cover:**

- Non-Grant Program Activities such as Enrichment Events for US Grantees, Fulbright Outreach, and Other Program Events.

### **End-of-Year Funds Expenses primarily cover:**

- Commission 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Activities (End-of-Year Funds FY23);
- Commission Office Relocation (End-of-Year Funds FY24).

Costs for the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for all grantees provided by the U.S. Department of State are not included.