

# EXCHANGES WITH EURASIA: RUSSIA, UKRAINE, CAUCASUS, AND CENTRAL ASIA

## KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- Several Department of State exchange programs bring students, teachers, and other leaders from Eurasia to the United States for increased engagement and to develop professional ties.
- Programs in Eurasia include the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), the Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program, and the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program.
- The strongest supporters of these programs are U.S. ambassadors in Eurasia, who view exchanges as a critical long-term commitment in leadership development and strong bilateral relationships.

## LEGISLATIVE GOAL

- **Sustain and increase the United States' engagement with Eurasia, including Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus, and Central Asia.**

## PROGRAM DETAILS

U.S. national interests in Eurasia (Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus, and Central Asia) are of the highest priority. Critical issues in recent years involving this region have included: energy and nuclear security, anti-terrorism, Iran, North Korea, and Ossetia. Over the past 15 years, the United States has made significant investments in exchange with this critical region of the world. In recent years, the worldwide exchanges budget has risen and the Fulbright programs with Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus, and Central Asia have strengthened, including a U.S.-Russia community college initiative.

Overall, however, our exchanges with this critical region have declined. Current events make it clear that increased engagement with Russia and its neighbors is needed to maintain the ties we have developed, to continue to expose future leaders to U.S. ideals and values, and to build the basis for productive cooperation on issues of mutual concern.

Examples of effective programs in Eurasia include:

- Alumni of the **Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)** and teacher programs have assumed positions of leadership in local government, NGOs, and small businesses in every country of the region. According to attitudinal surveys, FLEX alumni have much stronger aspirations to leadership positions than others in their age bracket, and some have already become key players in democratic political movements. Their U.S. experiences have given them a vision of pluralistic citizen participation in government. The FLEX program and similar exchanges in Southeast Europe for high school students receive more than 40,000 applications for 1,100 slots. 2009-10 participants are placed in all 50 states.
- The **Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program** and **Global Undergraduate Exchange Program** equip future leaders in Eurasia with the knowledge and skills to build democratic institutions. Alumni hold leading posts at senior levels of government, industry, and civil society. This year, Muskie Fellows are active at 118 universities in 41 states, and **Global Undergraduate-Eurasia** students are found on 45 university and college campuses in 32 states.
- The role of teachers and researchers is particularly important in shaping the attitudes of a new generation of citizens: **U.S. exchange programs for teachers and faculty (Teaching Excellence Awards)**, the **Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP)**, and the **U.S.-Russia Language, Technology, Math and Science (LTMS) Teacher Program** are among the most effective “multiplier” programs.