



**ORAL STATEMENT BY
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE,
FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduction

Madam Chairwoman, Congresswoman Lowey, Members of the Sub-Committee and Staff: Thank you for allowing me once again to present on behalf of the American Councils for International Education. I am requesting that the Subcommittee recommend funding in fiscal year 2016 in the State, Foreign Operations of \$630m, for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I also urge your increased support for assistance for East Europe and Eurasia, where renewed bloodshed, immense social dislocation, and serious, potentially long-term political divisions have occurred.

I have worked in Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia as a scholar, teacher, and director of several major assistance initiatives for the past 40 years. I am president of American Councils, a nonprofit organization that implements USG exchanges and educational development across East Europe and Eurasia, Afghanistan, China, Africa, and the Middle East.

Founded in 1974, American Councils is one of the leading academic exchange and educational organizations administering U.S. Government, World Bank, foreign government, and privately funded programs in the non-English speaking, "critical regions" of the world; regions that are vitally important for U.S. national security, but not well served by the established academic mobility linkages, through the usual forms of bi-national cooperation.



Exchanges: ECA Account

Congress has played a vital role in defining our national goals in critical world areas through the support of well-coordinated exchange and development programs, linking highly effective people-to-people exchange with research and developmental initiatives, to help nations to advance positive social and economic change. The FLEX program (created by Bill Bradley and Jim Leech) for Eurasia, and the YES program (established by Ted Kennedy and Dick Lugar) for nations with significant Muslim populations were born, as you know, here in this very building.

The FLEX and YES programs, whose alums now approach 40,000 around the world, have come to serve as highly visible models of transparency, inclusion, and acceptance of ethnic diversity, innovation, and physical challenge. They have created real access to opportunity in countries where, in the past, such opportunities were available only through patronage. In that respect, they represent American values and ideals **in action**, rather than as words on a page. Moreover, exchange alumni take on increasingly important roles in their home countries in government, business, and the NGO community.

Outbound programs with these critical regions for U.S. students, teachers, and scholars have, in turn, ensured that America's own capacity to engage with a rapidly changing world is preserved. Our own national security and global competitiveness depend on our ability to understand and engage peoples with diverse histories, cultures, politics, economies, and languages—and the portfolio of National Security Language Initiative programs is producing results for American students that are unprecedented in the history of U.S. education: results, which are described in a major refereed study, just released by Georgetown University Press, speak for themselves.¹

This Subcommittee, in particular, deserves credit for embracing these activities.

Assistance Account (EUR/ACE)

- **Title VIII**

I would also like to thank this Subcommittee for its continued support of the Department of State's Title VIII, Research and Training for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. American Councils is among the administering organizations for this program. Title VIII has never been more critical to our national security interests than today. It supports policy-relevant research, on-site fieldwork, and advanced language training in areas essential for U.S. policy formation and analysis. [At a recent conference convened by the Carnegie Corporation, practitioners in U.S. foreign policy have designated the kinds of region-specific, grounded research supported by Title VIII as the "most useful and practical scholarship for their daily work."]

¹ Davidson, Dan E. "The Development of L2 Proficiency and Literacy within the Context of the Federally Supported Overseas Language Training Programs for Americans." *Advanced Proficiency and Beyond*, eds. Tony Brown and Jennifer Bown, Georgetown University Press (2015), 117-150.

- **Testing**

U.S. technical assistance for a new generation of transparent, merit-based university admissions tests has had a major impact on the elimination of widespread corrupt practices surrounding college admissions in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Ukraine over the past decade, bringing about a shift in the academic cultures of these nations with regard to their reputations for fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity. That assistance is now urgently requested by the Ukrainian government to strengthen and modernize, not only assessment, but education administration practices overall: an essential step to advance Ukrainian integration with Europe and the U.S., opening up many new avenues of cooperation.

- **EHU**

Finally, I want to acknowledge the support over the past several years of this Sub-Committee for the European Humanities University, which was expelled in 2004 from Belarus by President Lukashenko, but thanks to U.S. and EU assistance, was able to relocate and resume operations just over the border in Vilnius, Lithuania. EHU is a remarkable example of trans-Atlantic cooperation in support of a highly visible symbol of free speech and academic freedom. But EHU is also an operating institution that must meet budgetary, personnel, and accreditation requirements, just like any other European university. Of EHU's graduates, 66 percent are currently active and employed inside Belarus. They are the real future leaders of Belarus and our hope is that the University may be able to resume certain of its instructional operations inside Belarus even in the coming year. As EHU now faces re-accreditation, I urge the Sub-Committee to keep the support of this unique Belarusian institution foremost in mind.

Thank you very much.