

International Exchange Alumni Newsletter

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U.S. Embassy, Ankara – Public Affairs

Welcome to the International Exchange Alumni Newsletter of the US Embassy, Ankara. Here you will learn about the success stories of your fellow alumni, information about Embassy programs and events, and training and job opportunities offered exclusively to our alumni. Have an idea for an alumni project or event? Have a success story or useful tip you want to share? Write to the Alumni Coordination Office at usaturkeyalumni@state.gov



Ambassador Highlights the Value of Educational Exchanges as U.S. Turkey Fulbright Commission Celebrates its 65th Anniversary

On January 13, Ambassador Bass hosted a reception in his residence attended by over 160 guests from all over Turkey to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the [U.S.-Turkey Fulbright Commission](#). In his remarks to the assembled Turkish officials, Fulbright alumni, staff, grantees, and guests, Ambassador Bass highlighted the invaluable contributions that Fulbright educational exchanges have made towards opening minds and promoting mutual understanding. Fulbright Commission Director Dr. Ersel Aydinli explained that the program has touched almost all 50 U.S. states and all 81 Turkish provinces, supporting over 6,000 two-way exchanges since the Commission began its work 65 years ago. To commemorate the occasion, the Commission produced a documentary video with original testimony from a few dozen Fulbright alumni, including former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan. A special guest of honor, Prof. Kaymakcalan, spoke both on the video and at the reception. Now 91 years old, she was the very first Turkish woman to receive a Fulbright and participated in one of the original groups that traveled to the United States 65 years ago. The event was covered widely by Turkish news agencies, newspapers, and TV stations.



Photo Contest for Summer Work and Travel (SWT) Alumni

In February the U.S Mission in Turkey organized a Summer Work and Travel photo contest.

Over 100 SWT alumni submitted photos taken during their time in the United States. A jury at the Mission selected 10 finalist photos. To choose the winner, voting on the [SWT Turkey Facebook page](#) took place from February 10 to February 29. During this period, people “liked” the photo that they thought best represents the SWT experience. The photo with the most “likes” won an iPad Mini, the second place received an iPod Touch, and third place won an iPod Nano. Visit the [SWT Turkey Facebook page](#) to participate in the latest contest going on now!



Toastmasters Demo Event Exclusively for Alumni

The [Ankara Toastmasters \[English\] Public Speaking and Leadership Club](#) introduced around fifty U.S. exchange alumni to the Toastmasters system on April 27 at Turkish-American Association (TAA) with a demo meeting.

Toastmasters help people become stronger speakers and better leaders. They gather every Tuesday at 19:00 at [Turkish-American Association \(TAA\)](#), Kavaklıdere. A typical meeting has a prepared speeches session, an impromptu speaking session, and an evaluation session, divided by a 10 minute break. They follow instructional manuals provided by Toastmasters International, USA and at the club, participants have a chance to speak in front of a friendly and supportive audience. It is also a great networking opportunity for people from different professions who want to maintain and improve their public speaking ability in English.



Hubert H. Humphrey Alumni Association Holds its Annual Reception

The [Humphrey Alumni Association](#) held its annual reception on February 5 at the Turkish American Association in Ankara. Over 20 Humphrey Alumni attended including Member of Parliament Utku Çakırözer. Humphrey Alumni Association President Ayşegül Çerçi and U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer Jonathan Henick both highlighted in their remarks the importance of Humphrey Alumni to furthering mutual understanding between Americans and Turks.

First time ever! Turkish Alumni Team Wins in the AEIF Competition

Alumni from more than 137 countries submitted 829 project proposals to the sixth annual Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) project competition. The 61 winning teams in 51 different countries will receive grants of up to \$25,000 each to support projects.

For the first time ever a Turkish alumni team has been awarded grant with its project called “Give Me a Hand for Refugees.” The members of the winning project team are **Umut Berker Sevilmiş** (Team Leader, 2012 Professional Exchanges and Training Program Alumnus, and Project Coordinator of Nilufer District Governor's Office of Bursa), **Yüksel Serdar Oğuz** (Team Member, 2012 Professional Exchanges and Training

Program Alumnus, and Correspondent of Anadolu Agency) and **Salim Ezer** (Team Member, 2011 Professional Exchanges and Training Program Alumnus, and International Relations Expert of International organization of Turkic Culture).

In order to help the influx of refugees integrate into Turkish society, the alumni team will provide integration, Turkish language, and vocational education courses for Syrian refugees aged 18-35 years. These courses will include general knowledge about Turkey, how to access public services, what their rights are, guidance, and counseling. Additionally, refugees that obtain a work permit will receive assistance in finding a job with the support of the Turkish Employment Organization.

Small Grant Winners: Alumni TIES on Refugee and Migration Issues

Elif Karsli attended the Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminar (Alumni TIES) on the topic of refugee and migration issues in Zagreb, Croatia February 22 – 26. Participants were eligible to apply for small grants of up to \$10,000 to fund projects related to refugee and migration issues within their communities. Elif Karsli along with her project team members Brian Ruane, Aysel Saricaoglu, Maria Barry, Rowan Oberman won a small grant with their proposal entitled “TURKEY AND IRELAND: Next Generation Teachers Co-Working for Refugee and Immigrant Communities in Turkey and Ireland”. The aim of the project is to create positive change in refugee and immigrant communities in Turkey and Ireland by empowering next generation teachers through cross-cultural collaboration. Congratulations to the team!

2016 Alumni Small Grants Program and Winners

U.S. Embassy Alumni Programs Office gave out over 25,000\$ in funding during the 2016 Alumni Small Grants Program competition. The competition’s main objective is to support innovative, small-scale, cutting-edge projects developed and implemented by U.S. Department of State exchange alumni, especially in women’s empowerment, workers’ rights, migrants, refugees and migration, freedom of expression, and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation. In this context, the following alumni projects received a grant.



- Nilüfer Ovaloğlu, a Fulbright alumna, wrote and directed a theater play called 'Contemplating Her'. Her dynamic play constantly evolves with new observations, interviews and workshops. The project was originally designed to listen, understand, record, deconstruct and construct aspects of expression related to women of Eastern Turkey, and to create a piece that contemplates women of all generations living now. Her play was performed throughout Mardin with U.S. Embassy financial support.



- Tuğba Tekerek, an IVLP alumna, trained twenty journalists in collaboration with the Open Data Journalism Foundation. Prominent data journalist Caspar Egas gave a 45-minute virtual training session as a part of the program. At the end of the workshop, the participants carried out a small project, on the basis of what they had learned about collecting, analyzing and visualizing data. Two weeks after the workshop, a two-hour online follow-up session was held, during which the participants were able to ask specific questions about their projects.



- Saadet Taş, a Kennedy Lugar Youth Exchange Study Program alumna, brought together American exchange high school students with Turkish primary students in her village, Aliaga, a sub-province of İzmir. The program activities included playing street games, doing sports, and enjoying traditional foods with local families. On the last day of the project, which was May 21, World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, they exhibited their drawings or sculptures, and performed the songs and dances that they had worked on during the entire program.
- In September, İlker Aytürk, a Fulbright Alumnus, will increase Holocaust awareness through two one-day seminars in both Ankara and İstanbul, where groups of 20-25 attendees will be introduced to the Holocaust through the novel teaching method called Timeline Activity, which bolsters interactive learning. His project will conclude with a live video conference from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum , where a Holocaust survivor will address the Turkish audience.
- Umit Barış Urhan, a Legislative Fellows Program alumnus, will organize a two-day workshop to provide participants with guidelines to better comprehend the U.S. economic structure along with its impacts on the Turkish economy and the essential elements of policy-making. During the workshop, participants will deal with pre-defined economic scenarios in which changes in the U.S. economy are expected to trigger a set of economic indicators in emerging economies including Turkey. Guided by invited speakers and moderators, participants will solve several interconnected scenario elements to develop and communicate professional solutions in a contest-like environment.

Keep in Touch

International Exchange Alumni

International Exchange Alumni Website: a place where past and present U.S. government-sponsored exchange program participants find tools to advance their communities and our world. Benefits of joining: alumni directory, job center, grants, events, research tools. View benefits here:

<https://alumni.state.gov/about-international-exchange-alumni/benefits-joining>

Register to become a member of International Exchange Alumni Website here: <https://alumni.state.gov/>

ExchangesConnect Web Site

ExchangesConnect is an international online community managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs that connects potential, current, and former exchange program participants so they can discuss application processes, programs, and living abroad.

Facebook

Get connected with international exchanges!

Twitter

ExchangesConnect is the online community from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), U.S. Department of State.

YouTube

With YouTube individuals are able to document their personal experiences with other cultures and share it with online viewers.

Tumblr

International Exchange Alumni on Tumblr.