

Dr. Markus Bergmann's Remarks on September 21, 2017

It is my distinct pleasure and my privilege to speak to you tonight in two capacities: First of all on behalf of the Republic of Austria and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration, and Foreign Affairs and second as a representative of the binational board of the Austrian-American Educational Commission, which consists of a total ten Austrian and American members appointed by their respective governments serve this binational exchange program.

One of the provisions of the Fulbright Act of 1946, which ingeniously allowed the Department of State to earmark the windfall revenue it was accruing overseas from the sale of surplus war material, called for executive agreements to be concluded between the United States and countries participating in the program that established unique binational commissions with equal representation that were entrusted with the responsibility for joint decision making from the very start. The idea of joint responsibility for managing this binational exchange program was extended to include joint funding for the Fulbright Program by the Fulbright-Hays Act in 1961, which provide annual funding for the Fulbright Program from the federal budget and also that gave foreign governments and other entities an opportunity to contribute to the program.

I am pleased to note that in 1963 the Republic of Austria was the first country in the world to enthusiastically seize the opportunity to participate in funding the program, and it has done so with increasing levels of support for outgoing Austrian and incoming American Fulbright grantees throughout the years. For example, this past year the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy announced a € 100,000 funding increase for the Austrian Fulbright student program – along with a pledge to support the new fundraising efforts of Fulbright Austria with matching funds up to €150,000.

One of the main responsibilities of the Austrian foreign policy is cultural diplomacy as an instrument of international cultural policy, which promotes the cultural presence of each country in an increasingly interlinked world.

It is common knowledge that the Fulbright program is – rightfully so - the flagship of American cultural diplomacy. It certainly is the flagship of Austrian – American exchange programs. The Fulbright

program embodies in an ideal manner the convergence of some of the main objectives of the cultural diplomacy of our two countries. the promotion of mutual understanding.

Since 1951 more than 3500 Austrian students and scholars had studied, taught and researched in the United States, more than 2700 American Fulbrighters have availed themselves of the opportunities which were offered to them in Austria. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few noteworthy aspects of the Austrian-American Program:

I am proud to note that Austria – as a small country – has a large Fulbright program, which is evidence of Austria's long standing commitment to the Fulbright idea: 75 students, teaching assistants, and scholars will be participating in the program this year.

At this juncture it is equally important to mention that Fulbright Austria manages a U.S. Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program for the Austrian Ministry of Education that places over 140 college and university graduates in higher secondary schools in communities large and small all over Austria each year.

The Austrian Fulbright Commission has been especially successful in negotiating collaborative agreements with Austrian universities, *Fachhochschulen*, museums and research centers to host and generously fund awards for US scholars as part of their internationalization efforts.

With 20 visiting US Fulbright Scholars, Austria ranked as the seventh largest Fulbright Program for US scholars in the world last year: after India, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Japan, and it will hold this ranking: And there 22 US scholars participating in the program this year.

The program relies on the support of institutional partners in the US in the same manner: For example, this year there are 14 Austrians are being hosted as Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants at German departments at colleges and universities in the United States – from Bates College in Maine to Linfield College in Oregon and in nine other states in between: in the Midwest, the South, and the West.

American universities regularly double the value of the awards Austrian Fulbright Students receive by topping them directly off with additional scholarships, stipends, or tuition remission packages, too, that average out to be around \$ 25,000 per Fulbright. This is a lot of added value!

Let me conclude with a few personal remarks:

I myself am a proud alumnus of the Fulbright program which has enabled me to obtain an LL.M degree from Georgetown University in Washington D.C. and which has contributed greatly to my professional education as an international lawyer and Austrian diplomat.

Since my return to the Foreign Ministry in Vienna from my position at the Austrian Embassy in Washington in 2006, I have been a regular member of a committee interviewing and evaluating Austrian applicants for the Fulbright program. And for the past five years, I have been heading within the Foreign Ministry the department of international scientific cooperation and inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, and I am glad that Austrian Fulbright Commission is part of this portfolio.

I thank chargé d'affaires Eugene Young for his wonderful hospitality, and by joining him in thanking Dr. Lonnie Johnson and his dedicated staff for their impressive and highly successful efforts on behalf of US – Austrian relations and educational exchange.

You all have been doing a great job throughout the year, and it hasn't always been easy. Please keep up the excellent work.