

**Q:** If we may start with what are the challenges the American education in an environment like the one here in Bulgaria faces.

**A:** We have had challenges with the regulations to start an American university because the regulations were made for traditional Bulgarian universities. Our system is much different, with different structures and methods to provide quality education as well as ways to organize our programs. So, in that time it was hard for our colleagues at Bulgarian institutions to understand what we were trying to do. Yet the situations of miscommunication are becoming fewer and fewer.

**Q:** How do AUBG students perform in terms of career development?

**A:** Actually we had a survey among our alumni and from it we concluded that our graduates are performing really well in their careers. The results state that more than 99% of graduates either continue their education or go straight to work. That confirms the information we receive by national rankings that our students are leading in terms of academic potential and career development. One of the concerns that people sometimes express to us is that even though we are providing exceptional for Bulgaria opportunities, we are in fact increasing the number of promising Bulgarian students who go abroad and that people in Bulgaria will not be able to benefit from those best students. Yet that is not confirmed by our statistics. About 2/3 of the graduates stay in Bulgaria. That is due to the fact they create or find fantastic opportunities for themselves in Bulgaria.

**Q:** But how can we increase interest towards majors that are not so popular?

**A:** I was thinking about this question a while ago. And I was also thinking what was the best sport to encourage a person to engage in. Should somebody take up football or tennis or skiing or any other sport? And the answer is whichever sport excites passion is the sport somebody should devote to. That would make the person happy and make him want to put energy into it. The byproducts of this sport will be physical fitness but that would be expressed through individual choice. And the same kind of thinking applies to studying because how we are thinking about it is that it does not have to necessarily be a Business major. If a person is interested in history and likes exploring Bulgaria's political affairs before World War II and understands Bulgaria's choices at that time, this person knows a lot about strategic management despite that he is studying history. So it is not a question of what is being studied but rather the process of developing a pattern of mind that forces to further explore.

**Q:** Let's say that news related to AUBG were born in the last month. It was also related to another higher educational institution which is very popular. It's the SDA Bocconi School of Management and the joint educational product you are going to offer. Can you share some more details with us?

**A:** The joint venture of AUBG and SDA Bocconi is an opportunity for us to expand our graduate program in Business which we have in Sofia. Thus we will be able to diversify and strengthen it. SDA Bocconi offers specialized education in Finance and Banking and is suitable for people who want to concentrate in the top management spheres. For us, it offers the opportunity to improve and broaden even our undergraduate degree in terms of educators, for example. This is our mutual strategy for expanding executive education because that is overall a new direction for us.

**Q:** It is important when talking about education to make a connection with the labor market and its needs. You are following the big picture in Bulgaria. To what extent is the university you are now leading answering the needs of the labor market? And of course, how can we improve that connection between business and education?

**A:** I think we have very good links to the business community in Bulgaria. Each year we hold a Job Fair to which we invite companies who are interested in AUBG students. This year we had over 50 companies. During the year representatives of companies are invited to talk to students because students have to be connected to the business world and understand what and why is happening as well as understand the strategies to communicate with those

businesspeople so they could see the prospects of our students. We are having ongoing contact with the business community. We have these business leaders on campus, and sometimes we have receptions after their lectures. They have the chance to talk to students because they want to get to the best talents available. But it is not necessarily for the person to be the best at a specific software or anything else. Of course, business can train these specific skills. People with cross-cultural mindset and familiarity with working with people from different cultures is sought. The ability to work with people from different backgrounds is very important especially in Bulgaria. Bulgarian business is more and more frequently becoming part of global business. The companies need employees who would adequately meet those challenges.

**Q:** What educational reforms can we expect in the future in Bulgaria, including at AUBG?

**A:** In terms of AUBG, we are always seeking to reform. We are facing the same challenges as Bulgarian educational institutions and we are also having challenges of our own. We would like to have easier access to education as well as to have good standards. Of course, there is the expenses and financing element. That are problems faced by Bulgarian institutions as well as universities all around the world. But we are constantly looking at diversifying our programs, getting fresh academic resources and adopting new pedagogical methods. As well as our campus has to be at the best level. The higher education sphere is very competitive at the moment. So we are always taking everything into account to make sure we are offering the best.

**Q:** And in terms of Bulgaria? What reforms can we expect in the future to improve the sphere? Reforms, which would of course effect your work as well.

**A:** Bulgaria does have a very rich and deep culture and history. It is between the East and the West so Bulgarians have this habit to look both to the East and to the West. Bulgaria has great quality of life. There are a lot of people with skills and adaptability. There are a lot of opportunities for Bulgaria as it is part of the European Union to enter markets and partnerships.