J. William Fulbright Commission
in the Czech Republic

30 Years of Academic Exchanges

Alumni Survey Report
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The Fulbright Program

In 1946, in the aftermath of World War II, President Harry S. Truman signed legislation into law to establish the Fulbright Program, an international academic exchange program with an ambitious goal—to increase mutual understanding and support friendly and peaceful relations between the people of the United States and those of other countries.

The Fulbright Program now operates in 160 countries and has provided over 400,000 students, scholars, teachers, artists, and professionals of all backgrounds and in all fields the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to finding solutions to complex global challenges.

Currently the Fulbright Program awards approximately 8,000 new grants each year. All Fulbright grantees are selected through merit-based open competition. Fulbrighters are selected based on academic and professional excellence and leadership potential plus their ability to share ideas with people in diverse cultures.

The Fulbright Commission in the Czech Republic

The Fulbright Commission is a Czech-American governmental organization founded with the mission of enhancing educational, scientific, and cultural exchange through scholarship programs and advisory and information services.

Other long-term goals of the Fulbright Commission are to increase expertise in specific fields, identify new fields in which cooperation is desirable to promote development, support outstanding individuals, expand activities by establishing cost sharing programs with participating institutions, spread awareness of the program, and provide information about education and research opportunities in the USA.

The Commission was founded in 1991 through a bilateral agreement between the governments of the United States and the Czech Republic. The Fulbright Program and the work of the Fulbright Commission are likewise co-financed by the governments of the United States and the Czech Republic.

Most of the Fulbright Commission’s work consists in administering fellowships and grants for study, research, and teaching in the U.S. for Czech citizens and in the Czech Republic for U.S. citizens. Program administration work includes activities surrounding the selection process and assistance during stays in the other country.

The Fulbright Program includes a number of specialized exchange programs. Chief among them are the Fulbright Scholar Program, enabling post-doctoral U.S. and foreign scholars and professionals to lecture and conduct research at foreign host universities and other institutions, and the Fulbright Student Program, enabling U.S. and foreign students at the post-baccalaureate level to study and conduct research abroad.

Over the past 30 years, the Czech Fulbright Commission has sent 1,137 Czech students, researchers and other professionals to the U.S. and brought 988 American grantees to the Czech Republic.
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1. Executive Summary

The Czech Respondents

For the Czech respondents, their stay in the USA under the Fulbright Program represented first and foremost an opportunity for career and professional growth. Collaboration with particular people or work at a particular institution in the US appeared to be their main motive for applying for a Fulbright grant. Other important motives included the prestige associated with the Fulbright program and more generally the opportunity to live in the US. The respondents’ main stated motives for wanting to go specifically to the US were the possibility to advance in their career, to draw inspiration for further professional development, to broaden and develop their research on a professional level, or to gain new work experience. Accordingly, when evaluating their stay, the Czech respondents were more concerned with professional benefits rather than personal ones.

Most respondents felt ready for their stay in the US and were looking forward to it. Only a quarter of them reported having had concerns. The most often mentioned ones were insufficient funds, separation from family/friends, and demanding work/study requirements. According to their statements however, these worries did not come true, as reflected in their overall satisfaction with their stay in the US.

Respondents who had an employer in the Czech Republic during their stay in the US were in most cases accommodated and unequivocally supported by them in their decision to go abroad, or at minimum the employer did not interfere in any way. Only rarely did complications with employers occur. Respondents who went to the US between 2013 and 2020 felt supported by their employers more often than other respondents. This may point to a certain shift in the attitude of employers toward greater support of their employees’ professional growth. Nevertheless, upon their return from the US, only one third of respondents with employers were enabled to put their new experience into practice, and half of them noticed no change in their employers’ attitude.

Almost all respondents made new professional contacts during their stay in the US. Seven in ten Czech respondents established long-term international cooperation; a definite majority did so on the individual rather than the institutional level. The result of professional cooperation cited most often—by three fifths of respondents—was presentations at research events or conferences, followed by articles in peer-reviewed periodicals. Next came monographs or parts thereof. Respondents regularly mentioned professional consultations, reviews, lectures, and the like—all important for maintaining contact.

The respondents’ satisfaction with their stays was remarkably high. The Fulbright Program exceeded the expectations of two fifths of respondents and met the expectations of more than half. Their expectations were unmet in only a few cases. Women stated significantly more often than men that the stay exceeded their expectations. On a scale of one to ten, where one stood for “completely satisfied” and ten for “not satisfied at all,” the average rating was 1.8. It is therefore unsurprising, yet still gratifying, that nine in ten respondents considered the Fulbright Commission’s work in the CR to be very satisfactory.

The majority of respondents considered their Fulbright-funded stay in the US to be a fundamental positive point in their life that broadened their horizons. An absolute majority of respondents also declared having been very well received at both the professional and social levels and having had sufficient professional support from their colleagues at host institutions. Respondents also felt their stay helped them to gain many other useful skills. The Fulbright grant kickstarted the career of half of the respondents.
Nine in ten respondents believed the Fulbright stay taught them to be more open towards new people and things. Six in ten started to pay more attention to activities connected with the social responsibility of companies and institutions and to better organize their work or studies. Approximately half of the respondents started to participate (even) more in public life, volunteer work, or charity after their return from the US.

An absolute majority of respondents have recommended a long-term stay abroad to someone else, usually to colleagues, students, friends, or acquaintances. Approximately half of the respondents know someone who went abroad because of such a recommendation. Recommending a stay was far more likely when the Fulbright alumni were in the US with family members—especially when satisfaction with their own stay was high. About two fifths of the Czech respondents travelled to the US with at least one family member, and half of these respondents went with both their partner and children.

About two thirds of the Czech respondents are interested in having some contact with the Commission, and the same number would like to be in touch with other Fulbright alumni. For staying in contact, the respondents overwhelmingly prefer meeting in person at events and/or receiving information by e-mail.

US Respondents

For the American respondents the most important motive when applying for the Fulbright Grant was the opportunity to travel to the CR and Europe. Almost three quarters noted it as very important. Another important motivating factor was that the program was just right at the time, which is certainly closely linked to the intention of travelling specifically to the CR. The prestige of the Fulbright programs in the US also played an important role. The primary reason for selecting the Czech Republic was the wish to experience Czech culture and the Czech way of life, with work experience and inspiration for career development being secondary reasons. In the overall evaluation of their stay, the American respondents say it positively influenced their personal life more than their professional life.

Less than two fifths of the American respondents had concerns before leaving for the CR. These usually concerned the language barrier, and less often the separation from family/friends or the new, unfamiliar environment. The concerns nevertheless did not come true, as attested by respondents’ high level of satisfaction with the stay and the fact that “only” three in ten said the difference between Czech and American culture was greater than they expected.

Respondents reported that in most cases, their employer looked favorably on their going on a Fulbright Grant visit to the CR. Seven in ten respondents said their employer absolutely supported their stay abroad. Respondents only rarely met with complications from their employers. After respondents returned, their employers mostly behaved neutrally. Three fifths of employed respondents did not notice any difference in their employers’ behavior towards them after their Fulbright grant; meanwhile one fifth changed their job or position.

A large majority of the respondents succeeded in establishing new professional contacts during their Fulbright grant. Approximately two thirds of the respondents established long-term international cooperation, with collaboration on an individual level overwhelmingly prevailing. Half of the respondents had demonstrated visible, long-term collaboration by mentioning a paper published at a conference. Two fifths cited having written an expert article. Other reported outputs of cooperation were authorship or co-authorship of books and the organizing of summer schools or exchange programs.
The Fulbright Program scored highly in meeting expectations and in satisfaction. It exceeded the expectations of seven in ten respondents and met the expectations of a quarter. The expectations of only two per cent were left unmet. Respondents’ overall satisfaction with the stay was above average. On a scale of one to ten, where one means “absolutely satisfied” and ten means “not satisfied at all,” the average rating was 1.8. It is therefore unsurprising, yet still gratifying, that eight in ten respondents considered the work of the Fulbright Commission in the CR to be very satisfactory.

The American respondents saw the benefits of their stay more in their “everyday” life, rather than the professional sphere. This is attested by the respondents’ overwhelming agreement that their stay in the CR helped them to better understand American culture and society. An absolute majority of American respondents viewed their Fulbright-funded stay in the CR as a crucial positive point in their life, which broadened their horizons and thanks to which they came to understand life in a multicultural environment and established new friendships. Less pronounced were the benefits of the stay in developing new and useful skills and higher confidence, and in the professional area of their lives.

It also appears that a connection with Czech culture is the thing that almost all the American respondents brought back from the CR. Eight in ten respondents agreed that since their return from the CR, they have been sharing and spreading Czech culture in their social environment. A similarly high share of American respondents learned to be more open towards new people and things from their stay in the CR. Two fifths of the respondents started to participate (even) more in public life, volunteer work, or charity after their return. Two thirds declared having initiated a volunteering activity themselves or participated in one during their stay in the CR.

There was also a certain level of connectedness noted among the American alumni. They appear to be more connected across the community of American Fulbright alumni outside of their year. Almost four fifths of respondents know at least one Fulbrighter from a different year.

All respondents reported having recommended a long-term stay abroad to someone—most often to their colleagues or students, but also to friends and acquaintances. It is noteworthy that three fifths of respondents know someone who really did travel abroad to work or study because of their recommendation. Approximately one third of American respondents travelled to the CR with their family.

Seven in ten respondents would welcome some contact with the Czech Fulbright Commission, and six in ten would welcome some contact with other Fulbright alumni. For this contact, the respondents would overwhelmingly prefer meeting in person at events and/or receiving information by e-mail.
II. Survey Design

The purpose of this survey was to map the experience of the alumni of Fulbright Commission programs who went to the USA or to the Czech Republic and see if and how their stay was expressed in their personal, professional, or public life; that is, if it fulfilled the expectations of the grantees—but also the main goals of the Fulbright Commission. This is the second such survey among Czech Fulbright Commission program alumni. The first was conducted in 2007 among Czech and Slovak grantees, and the present survey is in some respects a follow-up.

The survey comprised a qualitative and quantitative part. Separate online surveys were first carried out among the Czech and the American alumni. Six in-depth interviews with Czech alumni were conducted afterward.

The Fulbright Commission reached out to 1,094 Czech grantees who went on stays to the USA in 1989 through 2020. Four hundred and thirty-five of them opened the online questionnaire sent, and 358 respondents completed it. The overall response rate of the online-form survey among Czech alumni was 33%. This is a relatively successful result. The numbers above also show that willingness to complete the form was very high, amounting to 80%. In other words, if an alumnus decided to open the form, they usually did complete it, indicating a high level of loyalty among Czech alumni.

The situation with American grantees was similar. Seven hundred sixty-two e-mail invitations were sent to grantees who came to stay in the Czech Republic in 1989 through 2020 (or in the former Czech and Slovak Federative Republic; we are using the name Czech Republic throughout the report for simplicity). Three hundred seventy-two American respondents opened the questionnaire, and 250 completed it. The response rate was a favorable 33%, the same as for the Czech grantees. Willingness to complete the form was relatively high here too, at 67%.

The willingness of respondents to give feedback is seen in the large amount of sometimes very detailed follow-up comments they wrote in the comment sections and open questions.

The online survey among Czech alumni was conducted at the end of October and the beginning of November 2020; among American alumni, responses were received at the end of November and the beginning of December 2020. The average time spent filling out the Czech form was 18 minutes; for the American one, it was 17 minutes.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in January and February 2021 online or in-person. The purpose of these interviews was to acquire further information for broader and better interpretation of the results from the quantitative survey among the Czech alumni.

We have included comments from the Czech and English online forms throughout the report, as well as comments from the in-depth Czech interviews, to better illustrate the quantitative data. These are marked “form” and “IDI” respectively and are in italics.
III. Respondent Characteristics

The distribution of Czech and American respondents by gender, age, period of their Fulbright stay, the stay length, and the presence of family members can be found in Table 1.

In both the Czech and the American group of respondents, the ratio of men and women is relatively even. In the group of Czech respondents who did an interview, there were slightly more men than women (60% and 40% respectively); in their absolute numbers, however, the gender ratio is balanced.

In terms of when they were staying in the US on a Fulbright grant, the Czech respondents can be divided into three uniformly large groups. One third of them received their grant between 1989 and 2004, one third between 2005 and 2012, and one third between 2013 and the present. Among the American respondents, there are slightly more of those who traveled to the CR between 2013 and 2020 (44%), one fifth came between 2005 and 2012 (20%), and a little below two fifths came before 2005 (36%).

Other than the period of their stay abroad, the Czech and American groups of respondents also differ slightly in their age at the time of the grant. Almost three quarters of Czech respondents were under 39 during their stay in the US (73%), whereas this age group makes up only about half of the American respondents (54%). This is mainly due to the low representation of the 30 to 39 year-old category and a higher share of people who were over 50 at the time of their stay.

As for the length of stay, the Czech respondents are divided relatively evenly into three categories. Roughly three in ten stayed in the USA for 3 to 6 months (31%), another three in ten stayed between 7 and 10 months (29%), and a similar number stayed for over 10 months (32%). The smallest number of respondents went for a stay shorter than 3 months (7%). The grant lengths have a logical link to program types. The majority of respondents from the programs for MA or Ph.D. students spent seven months or more in the US (80%). Roughly half of the respondents from the programs for scholars and/or lecturers spent between three and six months in the US. The length of stay in the US also correlates with the period of a stay. Half of the respondents who went on a Fulbright stay to the US in the 2013–2020 period went for 3 to 6 months. Meanwhile nearly 6 in 10 Czech alumni from the 1989–2004 period went for a stay longer than 10 months. Men travelled to the US more often for 3 to 6 months, while women more often stayed 7 months or more—75% women vs. 57% men.

For the American alumni, the length of stay also correlates with the type of program. The majority of respondents from the “English Teaching Assistant” (ETA) program stayed 10 months in the CR (68%). More than half of the respondents from the “Scholar, including Distinguished Chair” program spent between 3 and 6 months in the CR. Here, the length of stay as well is linked to the period in which the American respondents travelled to the CR. Roughly half of the respondents who came to the CR on a grant between 2013 and 2020 stayed for 3 to 6 months. Grantees from the 1989–2004 period more often went to the CR for 10 months or more. Men more often went on a Fulbright stay to the CR for 3 to 6 months (43% men vs 15% women); women more often went for 7 to 10 months (52% women vs 28% men).
Table 1 Principal characteristics of respondents by home country (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Czechs</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-2004*</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2012</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2020</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at time of grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 and younger</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and older</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 3 months</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 months</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 10 months</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 months</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only husband/wife/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partner</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband/wife/partner and children</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three American respondents stayed in the Czech Republic on a Fulbright grant before 1989.

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020

The majority of grantees travelled unaccompanied to both the CR and the US (57% and 66% respectively). Czech respondents took their family with them overseas more often than American ones (24% vs. 14%); American respondents were more likely to be accompanied by only a husband/wife/partner (13% vs 20%). Only a few respondents went on a grant accompanied only by children.

Whether the grantees (Czech or American) went on a stay abroad with or without family had more to do with their age and gender and the type of program than with their length of stay. There is also a logical correspondence between grantees’ age and partnership status and whether they travelled accompanied or not. The younger respondents (29 years and younger) usually went on their own; the older ones mostly with family. The grantees who went on a program to the US with children were more often those over 40 and those who went on scholar/lecturer grants. Men were more often accompanied by a wife and children; women more often took only children with them (yet even here this was very rare). A similar correspondence can be seen in the American respondents. Those who were 40 and over at the time of their grant significantly more often took their partner and possibly children with them. Those who came on the “Student” or “ETA” programs (which often means younger alumni still without families) came unaccompanied almost without exception. Half of the grantees of the “Scholar, including Distinguished Chair” programs on the other hand came to the CR with family. Women arrived more often solo, while men were more often accompanied by a wife/partner and children.

Table 2 shows the distribution of alumni by type of program and field of grant. The Student program (for MA and Ph.D. students) was the one through which the single largest number of Czech respondents—almost two fifths—went to the US. Three in ten Czech respondents went to the US on a scholar/lecturer grant. Twelve percent of Czech respondents stayed in
the US on a postdoc program and 8% on a program for elementary or high school teachers or administrators. The respondents also included grantees of programs for NGOs (5% of respondents), the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship program (2%), and unspecified programs such as summer schools, etc. (6%). Men were significantly more often grantees of scholar/lecturer programs; women more frequently went via programs for students.

Table 2 Type and field of program: distribution by home country (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of program for Czech grantees</th>
<th>Czechs</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (in MA/Ph.D. programs)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoc</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholar/lecturer</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary/high school teacher/ad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other programs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of program for American grantees</th>
<th>Czechs</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholar, including Distinguished Chair</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other programs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study/expertise</th>
<th>Czechs</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences and humanities</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and architecture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy (including ETA)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020

A large number of American respondents came to the CR on the “Scholar, including Distinguished Chair” grant (41%), while almost three in ten respondents came to the CR through a grant for English language assistants (in high schools)—“English Teaching Assistant” (ETA). Significantly fewer American respondents came to the CR on student and other programs. Similarly to the group of Czech respondents, the percentage of American men travelling on a “Scholar, including Distinguished Chair” program was significantly higher than for women, whereas American women more often travelled to the CR as students.

The majority of the Czech alumni went to the US on grants in the social sciences and humanities, or in the natural sciences. Among American grantees, education is represented most strongly, followed by the social sciences and humanities. This is because the ETA grantees group is significantly larger than the other ones within the US cohort.
IV. Survey Results

A. Motivation and Preparation for the Fulbright Program, and Employer Response

A.1 Motivation to apply for a Fulbright grant and go to the USA/CR

“The opportunity to learn from the best.”

“Making new professional contacts in the USA.”

“I wanted to work with one specific person, but I didn’t know them personally before.”

“Fulbright facilitated connections that I could not have made on my own.”

The respondents were asked to indicate the importance of the different reasons that led them to apply for a Fulbright award. For Czech respondents, the opportunity to work with specific people / in specific institutions was definitely the most important one. This reason was considered very important by more than two thirds of the respondents (68%).

“At the time my contacts with United States academics and colleagues were limited to the East Coast. I knew however that I wanted to go to California—but I didn’t have any contacts there. So, I tried at random. I wrote to maybe ten universities, to people I thought might read it, that I would be applying for a Fulbright grant and that I would like some space, some office space, where I could work. Then I just waited. Three universities wrote back to me. The best communication was definitely with XXX. And it turned out to be a really good choice. So, no, I didn’t know anyone there and decided based on the three universities’ responses.” (IDI)

For roughly half of the respondents, the prestige of the Fulbright grant was very important, as well as the opportunity to go to the USA. For two fifths of them, there was an entire symphony of reasons, i.e. it was the optimal program at the time. A less important motive for applying for a Fulbright grant among the Czech alumni was the aspiration to obtain an international job or the good financial support from the program. The least important reason, relative to the others, was the recommendation of Fulbright stays by a colleague or friend (see Chart 1).
The opportunity to collaborate with specific people or work at specific institutions in the USA was a crucial motivating factor for the Czech applicants. These were not necessarily people or institutions with whom the applicant had already worked or had contact prior to applying for the Fulbright grant. The interviews and comments show that applicants often chose them after having decided to apply for the grant. In this situation, the applicants had to persuade the person or institution to establish cooperation. Sometimes this was an easy process, while at other times, the applicants had to persist in their efforts for some time. Thanks to this, new collaboration was established between the Czech and American sides that otherwise might have not taken place at all.

“I didn’t have any [initial] personal contact at the host institution at all. I had to start from zero and convince them to take me. I had to be quite persuasive and persistent to finally convince them to accept me... It took almost six months of this wooing, and by then, I really wanted to go there. The more energy I put in, the more I studied and investigated this organization, the more certain I was that it was really worth it.” (IDI)

“I had an argument with a professor at a European congress once, because of my poster. But in a creative way. So when I was thinking about whom to reach out to, her name came to mind. I wrote her an e-mail, and she remembered me and was very accommodating. It is a prestigious program, so the host department gets prestige from receiving the student as well. So it’s fine for them too, and they don’t oppose it.” (IDI)
At other times, it is the prestige of Fulbright grants in combination with the opportunity to travel to the US, or the “strong” recommendation of a colleague or friend who has already had the same experience.

“I was motivated by the opportunity to study in the USA, of course. And because Fulbright has a name. I could tell that whenever I mention it, it rings out. So I knew it would be a well-organized program.” (IDI)

“It was all my colleague’s idea. He had been to the States, and we’ve worked together and published together; we get on well too. So, he basically bugged me into it. He kept telling me: go, travel, get out of here.” (IDI)

There were other, more specific, reasons to choose the USA, and they overlapped with the above-mentioned ones to some extent. The respondents were asked to select three main motives. The Czech respondents most frequently cited professional/expertise-related motivations, the opportunity to advance in their career (43%), to draw inspiration for further professional development (42%), or to further develop their research activities on a professional level (40%). An important motivating factor for choosing the USA was also the need for new work experience (37%). The respondents relatively often cited a wish to experience for themselves the American way of life/culture (28%) and to get to know American colleagues and see how they work (23%). Other reasons were cited less often and had more to do with respondents’ individual situations—for example, improvement of English language skills, the opportunity for family members to live in the US for a time, or the prevention of professional burnout. It is noteworthy that only a fraction of respondents went to the USA with the aim of getting an international position (see chart 2).

“I applied for a Fulbright grant because it was the next logical step in my scientific career. I had been on several study stays in different European countries, but the experts on what I wanted to do always were and are in the US alone.” (form)

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Chart 2: Three main reasons to go specifically to the USA, CR, in percent

- Move forward in my work/professional career: 43%
- Draw inspiration for further professional development: 42%
- Develop my scientific activity on a professional level: 37%
- Gain new work/professional experience: 30%
- Experience the American way of life and culture: 28%
- See American colleagues and their style of work: 23%
- Improve my language skill in English: 16%
- Establish new work contacts: 14%
- Opportunity for family to live in the US: 13%
- Experience study in the USA: 11%
- Strengthen professional contacts: 9%
- Idea of getting international position: 8%
- Prevent professional burnout: 7%
- Opportunity to travel in the USA: 6%
- Other: 3%

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020
It can be assumed that reasons relating to decisions on where to direct one’s career next or where to find inspiration are connected to some extent with the above-mentioned optimality of the Fulbright Program at the given moment. The interviews showed that an application for a Fulbright grant often correlated with a time in respondents’ lives when they were considering where and how to move forward in their scientific work, for example after their conferment, when seeking a new direction in their field, or after finishing their Ph.D. Another reason could be changing or broadening their field of expertise, making the US a professionally attractive destination and thus also a reason to apply for the grant precisely because of this change.

“To be honest, part of my motivation was to finish my dissertation. When I was writing it alongside all my other activities, it was really difficult to finish it. Now I could focus on it for a truly long time. This was a sort of pragmatic motive on my side.” (IDI)

“It was the right time for me. I could feel myself running in circles, hitting a glass ceiling. And if you have a longing to go forward, to work differently and think differently, you really have to leave your bubble of comfort. You have your routines, but you feel there’s more to it all. But you have to possess a longing to experience new things.” (IDI)

“...I had been thinking about applying for a Fulbright grant for years but had never found a good enough reason to do it... to tell you the truth it was only when I started working at this foundation and suddenly worked in an area where there was a place of excellence in the US that interested me. So, I told myself, here, this could be a reason to apply for that Fulbright grant, because this was really interesting for me.” (IDI)

The American respondents cited slightly different reasons for applying for a Fulbright grant than the Czechs did. It is not surprising that for the American respondents the possibility to travel to the CR was the most important motive for applying for a Fulbright grant. Three quarters of them (74%) said it was very important for them. Nearly two thirds of the respondents (64%) decided to apply for a Fulbright grant because it was optimal for them.
at the time. The prestige of the Fulbright Program was important for more than half of the American grantees (54%). Since a large number of the respondents were teaching-program alumni, it is logical that more than half of them (56%) said the opportunity to have a unique teaching experience was an important factor; for one quarter of the respondents, however, this was unimportant. More than two fifths of the American respondents (44%) said the opportunity to travel to Europe was a very important reason for applying for a Fulbright grant. A little below two fifths were motivated by the possibility to work with specific people or institutions (38%). Other motivations (the recommendation of a colleague or friend, an international position, the program’s good financing, or making use of a “sabbatical” or “gap year”) were significantly less important in comparison, and some of them were closely related to respondents’ individual situations, just as we saw with the Czech respondents (see Chart 3).

Chart 3: Motives for applying for a Fulbright grant (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
*Note: The average from 1-to-4 scale where 1 = very important and 4 = completely unimportant

One of the three main motives for going specifically to the CR, and the dominant one was the desire to experience the Czech way of life and culture in-person—this was cited by almost half of the respondents (48%). One third of the respondents said the main reason was to gain new work experience. Roughly three in ten American respondents were motivated by the opportunity to travel within the CR or Europe (29%). The opportunity to draw inspiration for professional development was the main motive for another third (28%). About one fifth (20%) of American grantees said the opportunity to get to know Czech colleagues was an important factor in their decision to go to the CR. Another 18% wanted to improve their language skills or develop their career (17%). The other cited reasons were not cited by many respondents (see Chart 4). Nonetheless, the comments below show that respondents did have other reasons for wanting to go to the CR, such as the opportunity to stay in the country during the post-Communist transition, the inspiring personality of Václav Havel, curiosity, prior experience, or an (exclusive) professional focus on the CR, as demonstrated by the following comments:
“Wanted to see and help with the post-Communist transition.” (form)

“I had a few Czech students in my ESOL classes in the US (classes made up of students from all over the world) and was so impressed with their insights and the way they approached school, I wanted to see the country that helped to make them so remarkable.” (form)

“Had studied in the Czech Republic previously and wanted to immerse myself more deeply in the culture.” (form)

“My research could only be done there.” (form)

**Chart 4:** Three main motives to go specifically to the CR/USA (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience for myself the Czech way of life and culture</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain new work/professional experience</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to travel in the CR and Europe</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw inspiration for further professional development</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get to know Czech colleagues and their style of work</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve my language skill</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop my scientific activity on a professional level</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish new work contacts</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen work contacts</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit the country of my ancestors (Czech heritage)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move on in my work / professional career</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea of getting international position</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for family members to experience life outside the US</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent professional burnout</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience study in the CR</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
When we compare the reasons for applying for a Fulbright grant (see Chart 5), we see how very important the combination of the opportunity to go to the CR (due to a professional focus on the CR and/or for private reasons) and the optimal program offering at the given time was for the American respondents. The desire to experience life in the Czech Republic was unambiguously the most important motive. The Czech respondents on the other hand were drawn above all to the possibility to work with specific people/institutions in the US, or to grow professionally and develop their career; the opportunity in itself of travelling to the US or the optimal program offering were among the least important reasons for applying. This is probably due to the fact that in the CR there were other grant possibilities for going to the US—albeit under different conditions. Fulbright grants were and still are absolutely unique in that they offer full financial coverage of the stay not only for the grantee, but for his/her family as well, and in that a stay's length is also unusually long (up to 12 months). They are also unique in that they allow the grantee to freely choose their host institution, place of stay, and project purpose. Fulbright stays primarily support the establishment of new collaborations.

“...Professional growth at a prestigious American institution without the need to leave my family, which the Fulbright Commission enables you to take with you, was a definite bonus.” (form)

“Well, you just explore different options and then choose; Fulbright programs are not the only possibility in the world. There are many other grants and programs, and I don’t think the US is the best option in every field. So it doesn’t always make sense to go to the USA.” (IDI)

“Maybe it’s because there are so many more possibilities nowadays. I went to the USA when the Erasmus program was only just beginning. I didn’t travel out anywhere as a student. Not that it was impossible, but the options for students were very limited, nothing like today.” (IDI)

Chart 5: Reasons to apply for Fulbright grants. CR/USA comparison (‘very important’ only) (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
“I was far too excited to be worried at all.”
“The Fulbright Commission grants are well established and have a long tradition, which adds to the feeling of safety and personal comfort.”

When you are going abroad, whether for a long stay or a short one, beside the positive emotions, there can also be concerns. Yet in both the groups of Czech and American respondents, these concerns were felt only by a small number. We can therefore assume that the majority of respondents felt ready for their stays. The comments in the forms and the interviews also showed that they were looking forward to them.

**A quarter of Czech respondents had concerns before leaving** for the US, as opposed to almost **two fifths for the American respondents** (38%). These concerns were probably not very significant, since the answer “yes, some” was much more common than “yes, many” (see Chart 6). Concerns were expressed more often by respondents bringing families with them and by women. Among Czech respondents, those going to the US between 2013 and 2020 expressed more concerns; among American respondents, it was those going on ETA programs, which is logical as they were often younger and probably had less experience with staying in Europe.

**The concerns expressed most frequently by the Czech respondents**—but still not very often—**were insufficient funds** (35%), **separation from family and friends** (31%), and **demanding work/study requirements** (26%). They were less worried about a new and unfamiliar environment, being accepted by colleagues, or their return to the CR. Concerns about too many major cultural differences were marginal (see Chart 7). Concerns about insufficient funds worried respondents travelling with family more. Respondents going to the US alone worried more about being separated from family and friends. Respondents in programs for MA and Ph.D. students, i.e. typically younger respondents, were more concerned about study requirements and being accepted by colleagues.

**Chart 6: Did you have any concerns about your intended stay in the CR/USA? (Answers in percent)**

![Chart 6](image)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020. Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Chart does not show “I don’t know” answers because they were very rare (less than 2%)
Respondents’ comments showed that other reasons for concern included the paperwork etc. for family members’ travel to the US and how the family would manage, i.e. typically getting children into schools or living arrangements, and concerns about the functioning (and financial accessibility) of American health care. As one respondent put it:

“I was much more concerned about my wife and especially my daughters, how they would manage, but it all turned out well. Of course, it wasn’t easy for the girls at the beginning, but they remember our time in the US fondly.” (form)

“Of course, I had many concerns, but which was the most important one? To tell the truth, I was really worried about housing.” (IDI)

“Concerns about the (dys)function of the American health care system/insurance.” (form)

It is important to note that the concerns cited by the Czech respondents generally did not come true to any large extent. Only worries about returning to the CR and about separation from family and friends came true to any major extent, i.e., for about one third.

“We had concerns about finances, but we were able to cover the difference between income and expenses from our private funds. These concerns would in no way have kept us from applying for the grant, therefore I don’t want to over or under rate them. We can simply call them ‘high housing costs.’” (form)

“My greatest concern was the uncertainty of stable housing, and this fear unfortunately came true. It was difficult to find stable accommodations, and moving every week was financially demanding and exhausting. What was more, the housing conditions were sometimes so unsuitable that I had to move even in the middle of a given housing arrangement.” (form)

“I did have uncertainties, to tell you the truth. I worried how I would manage alone in an unfamiliar environment... I’m a social person, and I went alone and without knowing what it would be like. I worried about being separated from home, from the community of people I have here, which is great and precious to me. I didn’t know how I would feel. So I did have concerns here, but they vanished within a few weeks.” (IDI)

“My main concern was whether I would be a success, since I figured everyone there would be a superstar, but I was mostly just looking forward to it.” (IDI)
The **American grantees** that did have concerns worried **mostly about the language barrier that they might encounter in the CR. They were somewhat frequently concerned about being separated from family and friends** and about **the unfamiliar environment**. Other concerns were perceived as less important or completely unimportant (see Chart 8). Similarly to the Czech grantees, the younger American respondents were more concerned about how they would be accepted by their foreign colleagues. The fear of being separated and being in an unfamiliar environment was mentioned more often by those going to the CR alone, by women, by younger grantees (21 to 29 years), and by those who went for 7 to 10 months. As in the Czech respondent cohort, most of these concerns did not play out. Some of the concerns respondents cited were about the Czech bureaucracy, especially difficulties with getting a Czech visa, and about finding proper accommodations and schools for their children.

“We overcame the language barrier far better than we anticipated.” (form)

“I had slight concerns about the language barrier. It wasn’t really a problem other than feeling left out of some conversations.” (form)

“The language barrier was the most difficult. I had studied here in the U.S. before leaving, but it was still a struggle.” (form)

“I was worried about being in a small town for the first time in my life. In a way, they did come true: it was very isolating and hard to meet people for a long time. Ultimately, I loved my experience, but it was harder in a small town than it would have been in Prague, I think.” (form)
Chart: 8: Concerns before leaving for the CR (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Only respondents that did cite having worries in the previous question. Chart does not show ‘I don’t know’ answers since they were very rare (less than 2%)
A.3 Employer attitudes before a grantee’s stay and upon their return

“My stay helped me change jobs and find one where I could really make use of this experience.”

“My Fulbright added gravity to my work. This encouraged my employer to support my endeavors further.”

The reaction of a respondent’s employer played a considerable part in their decision on whether to go to the CR/the US. A large majority of the Czech grantees were employed upon leaving for their Fulbright stay (85%). Among American respondents, the share was smaller: roughly three fifths of them were employed (63%—see Chart 9). Most employed respondents were supported in their decision by their employers. Specifically, sixty-three percent of Czech respondents and 69% of American respondents were fully supported by their employers.

The employer did not at all intervene in the decision to go abroad for 20% of the Czech respondents and 15% of the Americans. Only a few respondents cited complications with their employers because of going abroad: 4% of Czech and 5% of American respondents. Four percent of Czech respondents and 8% of American respondents had to quit their jobs. The remainder cited some other situation.

The Czech respondents who went to the US between 2013 and 2020 felt supported in their decision by their employers more often than others. This might signify that employers’ attitudes are changing toward greater support for employees’ professional growth, including working abroad; the increasingly visible prestige of Fulbright grants probably played a part as well. The behavior of Czech employers also corresponded with the lengths of stays. Unsurprisingly, the shorter the stay, the more accommodating the employer was. Respondents more often said their employer was accommodating if the program was for six months or less. This comment (from an American respondent) illustrates however that negotiations with employers were not always easy:

“In truth, it took a lot of persuading. There was a feeling they were losing me and gaining only more work, knowing that supporting a new teacher would take a lot. I had waited three years to apply and was determined to teach abroad. In the end, I promised to return for several years if the principal could make this happen, and I did so. It is important to note that without the recognition of the Fulbright name, they would never have agreed. It is also important to know that I returned refreshed, energized, and even more devoted to my job and community.” (form)

Respondents also talked about the importance of employer support during their in-depth interviews. For example, the situation of doctors or teachers is very special, because they are more difficult to replace, even for a short time. But it is not only these professions. Respondents from other fields also pointed out the necessity of combining job responsibilities in the CR with a stay in the US. A supportive and accommodating employer can make things much easier for the grantee, especially if besides allowing them to go, the employer also provides some financial support, meaning that the grantee will not lose their income in the CR, or at least not all of it.
“Whenever I attended or planned to attend some course, I would do it during my vacation. In part since I figured that we had vacations so we could put that time to use. It felt unnecessary to go during the school year. And this was the first time I went during the school year… The principal just forwarded the Fulbright Program offer to us and told us to apply. I think there is a growing realization that when teachers participate in projects and courses, it brings schools prestige.” (IDI)

“In my field—medicine—it is extremely difficult for a person to withdraw from their responsibilities for a long time. I know that at universities there is some sort of sabbatical after a certain time, but that would be very difficult to apply in medicine. I work at the School of Medicine, but primarily, I work at a hospital. I could imagine leaving for six months if you only work at a university, but leaving a clinic for a longer period is very hard… The hospital was extremely accommodating in my case.” (IDI)

**Chart 9:** Employer’s approach to a grantee’s going abroad. CR/USA comparison (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer’s Approach</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My employer was really accommodating</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer didn’t interfere</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went despite many complications</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went although I had to terminate employment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t have an employer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020

We were interested not only in how employers behaved before a respondent’s leaving for their stay, but also if this changed in any way once they came back. A majority of the American respondents who were employed before going to the CR did not notice any difference in their employer’s behavior towards them (59%), one fifth found a new job position in connection with their Fulbright grant or changed positions, and one fifth said they had some other experience (see Chart 10). In their comments, the American respondents listed both the positive (predominating) and the negative experiences they had with their employers. Among the positive ones, they usually cited a stronger appreciation by their employer due to the prestige of the Fulbright Program; this was sometimes accompanied by a promotion. Negative comments usually cited underappreciation by an employer or complications with the return to work.
“I did receive recognition and a $5,000 bonus, but I didn’t know about it before I left.” (form)

“When I came home to America, I was offered a full-time teaching position at the same school.” (form)

“My dean is not that interested in what faculty do, even when it’s something as prestigious as earning a Fulbright.” (form)

“My teaching-exchange counterpart had to be removed and placed in a different position due to inadequate English skills and their culture shock causing them emotional struggles. I faced extreme resentment from my peers and my administrator upon my return for the troubles they had to go to to keep my exchange in place.” (form)

Nearly half of the Czech respondents (48%) did not notice any change in their employer’s behavior towards them. Roughly one third said their employer had enabled them to use their experience from the US (32%) at work. Approximately one fifth had some other experience, and 2% of the respondents had to put in extra work or time to make up for their absence (see Chart 10). Among other experiences, the Czech respondents cited pre-agreed or employer-imposed termination of employment, or a spontaneous job change, upon returning from the Program. Job changes can be perceived as a positive as well as a negative outcome of the Program: positive when it enabled the grantee to use their US experience in the new job, negative when this was not possible.

Alongside absolutely positive employer attitudes, respondents also mentioned negative experiences, such as reproaches for a long absence, envy among colleagues, and more.

“Both of my employers saw my stay in the US as a very good thing—especially as proof that I wanted to work on and develop my academic activities and career.” (form)

“My employer was thrilled at my going on the stay and was altogether accommodating; they even financially supported my trip out.” (form)

“I’d terminated my employment, and when I returned, it took me about a year to find a new job. The Fulbright grant was seen as over-qualification when I was applying for positions in public administration and NGOs.” (form)

“I had to restart my job as if I had just been hired; all my previous benefits were eliminated.” (form)

“My employment was terminated without my consent while I was away on my stay.” (form)

“I felt my employer was afraid my ambitions would grow.” (form)
Chart 10: Employer approach upon grantee’s return to the CR/USA (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Chart shows only respondents who were employed when leaving for the program.
“I think I made important long-term international contacts, in that I’m still in touch with my former colleagues and students, which I’m grateful for. I also met many other people through the Fulbright Program, and that has undoubtedly helped me grow my network.”

Almost all Fulbright grantees established new professional contacts: this was a bit more prominent in the responses of Czech grantees than in those of the American ones, which could be caused by the difference in the programs offered to Czechs vs. Americans (see Chart 11). Establishing professional contacts was a little more difficult for the younger American grantees (21 to 25 years old) and those who were in the CR on an ETA program. This program offers fewer opportunities to establish professional/work contacts than other programs do, as illustrated by the following comment:

“As an ETA, there weren’t really contacts in my field that I sought out in the same way there would be for an academic grantee.” (form)

If we then control for the American ETA grantees, we find almost the same level of establishing new professional contacts responses as in the Czech group.

Chart 11: Have you established new professional/work contacts during your stay in the USA/CR? (in percent)

![Chart showing the percentage of CZ and USA grantees who established new professional/work contacts]

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020

Establishing professional or work relationships is an essential prerequisite for the development of long-term international cooperation—which was achieved by seven in ten Czech respondents (71%) and by almost two thirds of American respondents (65%). This collaboration took place predominantly at an individual level (60%) in Czech as well as in American respondents. Eighteen percent of Czech respondents and 20% of American respondents established and maintained long-term collaboration between academic institutions. Nine percent of Czech respondents and 14% of American respondents were able
to maintain international cooperation with other institutions/organizations. It is obvious that the level of collaboration established or strengthened by the Fulbright Program in both countries is considerable—and comparable. Only a few respondents could not yet judge if the collaboration they established would continue (see Chart 12).

**Chart 12:** If so, did it lead to long-term international collaboration?, CR and USA comparison (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: The question was only answered by respondents who did establish new work contacts. The total is over 100%, as respondents could cite several types of collaboration.
The analysis of the quantitative as well as qualitative data showed that cooperation was not necessarily solely established and maintained through long stays abroad; shorter stays enabled it as well. It is also noteworthy that even when long-term cooperation was not established with members of the host institution, the respondents could use (and certainly used) these contacts to establish cooperation with other experts/institutions—and that enduring friendships were established through these programs.

“While my stay did not lead to any formal cooperation (collaborative research is not the norm in my field), I did make contacts that I still use today.” (form)

“But I have stayed in touch with my host professor and other individuals and colleagues who I met during my time there.” (form)

“I have many meaningful connections in the CR, namely many friends and families who ‘adopted me,’ but I don’t have ongoing professional connections at this time.” (form)

“No collaboration in the sense of collective projects and such has been established. But I benefit from the contacts to this day in the sense of professional inspiration or individual consultations.” (form)

“Collaboration with the host institution was not maintained, but the publication that was the result of my stay later led to international cooperation with many other places.” (form)

While some respondents stated in the survey that the coronavirus pandemic was a reason for temporarily postponing their collaboration, the in-depth interviews showed that the quick switch to online platforms could also have a positive influence on developing international cooperation. Grantees who returned from the USA just before the pandemic restrictions were put in place could use the transfer of in-person meetings to online platforms to continue “frequenting” their courses/seminars, where they met distinguished experts in their fields (which otherwise would almost certainly not have been possible); or to develop professional skills and experience with online teaching.

“The meetings were transferred online, which enabled me to remain part of the discussion group, as it all happens on Zoom… one of the activities we did was reading articles. An article was selected for us to read, and then the author was invited to our meeting. These were articles from the best journals in my field.” (IDI)
B.2 Results of professional collaboration

“Thanks to my new contacts, a broader collaboration with many colleagues has been established, which has resulted in many articles and research projects, not collective ones, but inspired by one another and linked together. My collaboration with people I met during my stay lasts to this day, and I hope it will continue for a long time to come.”

The most frequent results of the cooperation established during Fulbright grants were articles in peer-reviewed periodicals and papers at meetings or conferences. Roughly half (49%) of the Czech grantees who were able to establish collaboration wrote an expert article, and almost three fifths (58%) presented at a scientific conference. In comparison, two fifths (41%) of American respondents wrote an expert article as a result of their cooperation, and one half presented at a scientific conference. A similar share of Czech and American respondents said the result of international collaboration was a monograph or a chapter in a monograph (19% and 17% respectively). American grantees significantly more often than Czech ones published articles in regular journals or magazines (17% vs. 6%) or had a summer school or exchange stay as the result of their collaboration (22% vs. 12%). Artworks were also created as results of international cooperation. A relatively large number of respondents answered that they participated in other, miscellaneous forms of professional collaboration (see Chart 13). These typically included organizing collective research or artistic projects or workshops, various types of consultations and expert discussions, exchanging study materials, teaching or giving lectures, book translations, etc.

“I have also served my colleagues by reading and critiquing their English articles; I have been involved with about 30 MA theses, a real delight; I have done several Round Tables for the department and participated fully in all their activities.” (form)

“I gathered books and sent them for the department library. Two faculty members came to the US, gave papers, and visited us. We edited the dissertation of one.” (form)

“A joint application for a grant—which we received.” (form)

“The creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Czech and American universities was initiated during my stay. I involved both my departments in it—at the time the only non-humanities ones involved. Since then, the Memorandum has integrated more departments and is still very active.” (form)

“A joint project by my Czech school and the school of the American teacher who came to the CR the year after. Also, collaboration with other American exchange teachers and Czech colleagues, alumni of the Fulbright Program.” (form)

“Organizing of workshops and a special edition of a magazine.” (form)
Chart 13: What forms did this professional collaboration take? CR/USA comparison (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: The question was answered only by respondents who did establish long-term international collaboration. The total is over 100%, as respondents could cite several types of collaboration.
B.3 Contacts with other alumni

“During my stay, I participated in all the activities organized by the local Fulbright Programs Alumni Association. This brought many interesting encounters and helped me establish many new contacts.”

The previous chapter clearly shows that relationships are established and people and institutions are connected during Fulbright stays on many different levels, both professional and personal. Another such opportunity, and not an inconsiderable one, is the community of Fulbright Program alumni. This is what they themselves had to say about it:

“The opening two weeks of orientation with all the other Fulbright grantees in Seattle were absolutely crucial for establishing lasting friendships with people from around the world. We’re still in touch, and we still visit some of them (after 26 years).” (form)

“Establishing friendships that went on to become an in-person visit in the CR and professional collaboration with other people from the Fulbright contact network.” (form)

“I am in contact with many people, some of whom I met thanks to Fulbright grants... yes, I have very close relationships with people who are Fulbright alumni from a completely different time than I am. We made contact thanks to Fulbright, really.” (IDI)

“You need to be in touch with people who are open and have a similar experience. I’m not talking about influence behind the scenes, only sharing contacts, offering opportunities.” (IDI)

“I’m regularly in contact with friends from my cohort. We have a group chat that we talk in each day. They drove from Brooklyn, NY, to attend my wedding in Florence, Alabama. We spent New Year’s 2020 together, and we stay updated on each other’s lives.” (form)

“It helped to establish mutual study abroad programs with several universities and coops/internships with companies for our students and Czech students.” (form)

“I have also used the contacts to facilitate my own students visiting CZ.” (form)

“My Fulbright experience influenced my career path, but the other Fulbright scholars and the Czech and international students and researchers I met during my time in the Czech Republic had a significant impact on my personal and professional outlook.” (form)

The survey results showed that the vast majority of Czech respondents know at least one other Czech Fulbright grantee (94%). Roughly two fifths of the Czech respondents know two or three other Czech grantees personally (42%), and roughly two fifths know more than three other Czech grantees (42%). One in ten respondents knows only one grantee apart from themselves (see Chart 14). This is not solely a community of Czech alumni; thanks to stays abroad, there is a growing international community of Fulbrighters. This is confirmed by the findings that three quarters of Czech grantees know foreign Fulbrighters personally. More than half know two or more foreign Fulbrighters personally (57%; see Chart 14). Czech respondents who went on programs for MA and Ph.D. students more often know more than three other Fulbrighters, Czech or foreign.
Some respondents met Fulbright alumni even before deciding to apply for a Fulbright grant. It is not uncommon that it is this encounter or these people who inspire a person to apply for their grant. This can mean either that these people advised them directly to apply for a Fulbright grant or that they were simply that exceptional and inspiring on a professional, as well as a personal level.

“I think that word of mouth functions quite well. I was convinced. Many people around me went on a Fulbright stay before me. These were people I respect, people I think are very inspiring, and I saw that they gained very interesting knowledge, so I was convinced… In my life and profession, I met at least ten Fulbrighters who went on the program before I did. And this convinced me it was an important and interesting program. So, I think that this is probably the best result and the best publicity.” (IDI)

The American respondents were given slightly modified questions. The first one aimed to determine whether they are still in touch with other Fulbright grantees from the same year. It showed that three fifths of American alumni are in contact with at least one other Fulbrighter from the same year. Roughly two fifths of American respondents stay in touch with more than one grantee from the same year. Another two fifths are not in contact with any grantees from their year (see Chart 15). The youngest age group (21–29), women, and ETA program alumni are more often in contact with Fulbrighters from the same year than the other groups. The level of connectedness appeared to be higher across the Fulbright community than within the year, which is similar to findings in the Czech respondent group. Here almost four fifths (78%) of American respondents know at least one other grantee, and two thirds of them know two or more Fulbrighters (66%; see Chart 15).
We sought to determine whether the American respondents frequent the events organized by the Fulbright Programs Alumni Association. Nearly a quarter of the American respondents do (23%). But far more, roughly half of the American respondents (53%), declared that they have personally joined in activities supporting the Fulbright Program, such as petitions or letters to members of Congress and similar activities (see Chart 16). Respondents over 51 years old were more active in both senses. The younger group (under 40) appeared to participate less in this area. The alumni from the “Scholar, including Distinguished Chair” program participated more often in events organized by the Alumni Association. It must be mentioned here that this is not necessarily due to lack of interest in Alumni Association events; it can be due to lack of information about them, the cost, or their geographical inaccessibility.

“I’m not aware of any alumni events, but I’d be open to attending them.” (form)

“I want to get more involved, but I haven’t had the chance yet. I’ve just joined the Fulbright Alumni Association.” (form)

“I regularly read the Fulbrighter newsletter and attend any web events that seem interesting.” (form)

“I currently live in a US state which does not have a Fulbright Chapter, so I have few chances to network with other Fulbrighters in my area.” (form)

“I donate money, I sign petitions, and I am a member of the alumni association.” (form)
“I tell everyone it was the best year of my life.”

“It was one of the best experiences of my life, and I will continue to urge my colleagues to pursue Fulbright opportunities.”

“I established a whole spectrum of contacts at the university and outside of it. These are not just professional contacts, but also new friends from among our children’s friends and schoolmates.”

The impact of going on a Fulbright grant does not stop at individual alumni and their scientific and professional contacts. When grantees travel with family members, the stay has a great influence on them as well. Through the experience and encounters brought to family members, the (positive) influence of the Fulbright Program reaches beyond the academic or professional spheres.

**Two fifths of the Czech respondents (42%) went to the USA with at least one family member. Almost one quarter (24%) went to the US with a partner and children.** Roughly one in ten respondents went there with just a partner (13%), and 5% with children alone. From among the **American respondents, about one third (34%) travelled to the CR with family. One fifth brought only a partner to the CR**, and one in ten American respondents went on their Fulbright stay in the CR with a partner and children (14%).
Respondents cited the positive impact on family members during in-depth interviews—and some of them in the comments as well. The overall positive impact usually compensated for the demanding preparations required for the departure of the whole family. The experience of being abroad at the start of the coronavirus pandemic was an exception.

“To go to the US with family in my view means a huge amount of work beforehand. An enormous amount. From vaccination to searching for schools to a pedagogical and psychological examination of whether children are capable of being homeschooled... So it was a challenge for everybody. But my boys remember it fondly in retrospect. It was difficult for them, but they enjoyed it and identified with it. They still wear the T-shirts we had there. It’s obvious it was a benefit for them; they took it as a challenge.” (IDI)

“The need to arrange everything: a car, an apartment, and especially health care for the family. It was really very challenging, but it all worked out in the end.” (form)

“We miss the life we led in the US very much back home. The children, especially, didn’t want to go back to the CR.” (form)

“The stay in the US on the Fulbright Program was one of the best things in my life (both professional and personal). My daughter, who accompanied me and who was ten years old at the time, also prizes the experience. She perfected her English, made new friends, and learned to respect a different culture even more. She still remembers the stay fondly, and we are both very happy to have been able to take part in the program.” (form)

“I realize how much my stay in the Czech Republic meant to me and my family.” (form)

“The entire experience was amazing. Along with the rest of my family, we look back on that year in Prague as one of the most rewarding and meaningful experiences in our lives.” (form)

“We still celebrate Mikulas and Carodejnice every year. Our children speak and learn Czech!” (form)

Beside the impact that the experience of a Fulbright stay abroad has on family members, there is also the fact that they talk about it and share their stories; this is a recommendation—explicit or implicit—of a long-term stay abroad in itself. And this is not a marginal effect. Almost all respondents had recommended a long-term stay abroad to someone (98% of Czech respondents and 100% of American respondents). Recommendations went out most often to the respondents’ colleagues (89% of Czech respondents and 92% of American respondents), but often also to their students, friends, and acquaintances. Three fifths of the American respondents advised their children or other family members to go abroad for a long-term stay. This is also true for nearly half, or two fifths, of the Czech respondents. The lower percentage is most likely due to respondents’ individual family situations rather than their willingness to recommend the stay. The chart shows that American respondents, overall, made recommendations more often than Czech respondents did (see Chart 17).

An experience with the Fulbright Program could be recommended either as the generally important experience of a long-term stay abroad or as an experience with the Fulbright Program specifically. This recommendation could be an effort to make as many colleagues as possible aware of Fulbright grants, or it could be a selective recommendation of the Program...
to potentially eligible applicants. Both approaches were cited during in-depth interviews with Czech grantees.

“I see it as a high-quality program, and so I wouldn’t direct an average student to apply for it. But I did recommend it to a couple of really top students. One or two did apply, I think.” (IDI)

“I absolutely recommend Fulbright. If the applicants can do so, have them go for more than just three months. I’d say that six months is optimal, considering how demanding the preparation is; longer if they can. The experience is invaluable.” (IDI)

“I’ve recommended it to absolutely everyone since I came back. I want everybody to have this experience. I said it at the webinar, I wrote it on Facebook, I wrote a blog, and everything. I wish everyone knew about this possibility—I want my colleagues to know, so I recommend it all the time.” (IDI)

**Chart 17: Recommendation to go abroad. CR/USA comparison (in percent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends and acquaintances</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My own child/children</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family members</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Only respondents who declared having recommended a stay.

The number of respondents who knew of someone who actually did go on a study or work stay abroad after their recommendation is not insignificant. Nearly **three fifths of American respondents knew of someone who did so** (58%); two fifths even knew several such people. Similarly, among the Czech respondents, **roughly one half** (53%) knew someone who went abroad after they had recommended it, and three in ten knew several such people (29%). Sometimes, their recommendation efforts did not bear fruit, but this may have been the consequence of the present pandemic. And yet one half of the Czech respondents did not know anyone who went abroad thanks to their recommendation, and this was also the case for two fifths of the American respondents.
“We need to realize that without ever leaving the country, we have no chance... I don’t think I’ve been successful in inspiring my colleagues to do something similar... I don’t know of anyone who would decide to apply for a program to go abroad, but this may be due to the present unfortunate situation.” (IDI)

Chart 18: Do you know of anyone who actually did go study or work abroad after you recommended it to them? (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Only respondents who declared having recommended a stay.
C. Evaluation of the Stay

C.1 (Un)met expectations of the stay

“I feel like I’m an honorary Czech citizen now. And I believe my friends and family are quite tired of me still talking about the Czech Republic two years later. But I don’t care, because I had such an overwhelmingly positive experience.”

One of the most important criteria of the overall evaluation of the stay abroad was the extent to which grantees’ expectations were met. In this regard, Fulbright stays in both the CR and the USA were rated exceedingly well. The stay met the expectations of more than half of the Czech respondents (54%), and it exceeded the expectations of two fifths (43%). Women said more often than men that the stay exceeded their expectations (50% vs. 39%).

The respondent’s expectations were unmet in only 2% of cases. The American respondents overwhelmingly declared that their stay in the CR exceeded their initial expectations (72%), and roughly one quarter said that their expectations were met. Also, only 2% of American respondents declared that their expectations were not met (see Chart 19). The significantly greater percentage of American respondents, compared to Czech respondents, whose expectations were exceeded may reflect lower or more guarded initial expectations.

“When I look back after ten years, I still feel grateful I could be in a Fulbright program. The experience changed my life and is one of the most important milestones in my professional, as well as personal life. This is surprising and I didn’t expect it at all when I decided to apply for the grant.” (form)

“It has been an absolutely amazing ten months; I still think about it even six years later. I usually am not one to travel, it doesn’t interest me much, but this was really special. I can still smell the air, remember the trees there, the cicadas in the summer, the nice smell of the library where I went through the whole archive. It was absolutely magical and beautiful, and I drew out so much information and obtained so many documents.” (form)

“I expected the stay to benefit me professionally above all, which it did; although I would have been happy to participate more in the life of the host institution. What I had expected much less was the huge benefit to our family life. The time spent together in a different culture really united us and taught us to work as an independent family unit.” (form)

“I would recommend the Fulbright program or a stay in the Czech Republic to anyone. It was one of the most beneficial experiences of my life and a wonderful opportunity for personal and professional growth. The Commission went above and beyond to show that they truly cared about all of us in the ETA program, beyond what I expected of a formal commission.” (form)
In the few cases of unmet expectations, the respondents wrote the reasons in the open question form. The reasons for both the Czech and the American respondents were non-performance of all the planned professional activities or insufficient support from the host institution. Another mentioned reason was the worsening epidemiological situation, due to which some stays had to be cut short before planned activities could take place.

“The planned collaboration did not take place as the host was not very willing to expand his own scientific topic to incorporate methods and problems that we had previously agreed on.” (form)

“I was unsuccessful in establishing firm, functional, professional contacts—the host institution was not interested.” (form)

“I was not sufficiently welcomed or supported by host institution and I never understood why.” (form)

“The proposed research was very difficult to undertake with the lack of cooperation from the host institution.” (form)

**Chart 19:** When you look back on your stay in the CR/USA, to what extent were your expectations met? (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CZ</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It exceeded my expectations</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It met my expectations</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It didn't meet my expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
C.2 Impact of the stay on professional and personal life

“It was personally transformative.”

“It was a life-changing experience from which I still benefit, ten years after returning from my studies in the US.”

The overall experience from a Fulbright stay abroad met or exceeded the expectations of an overwhelming majority of respondents. When we asked about specific benefits of the grant and how strongly respondents agreed that the program did provide them, we see that among Czech respondents, the absolutely dominant opinion was that their Fulbright Program stay in the US was a crucial, positive point in their life, one that opened new horizons to them. A large majority (88%) agreed with both of these statements, while two fifths agreed completely. A similarly high level and intensity of agreement was expressed by the Czech respondents about being very welcomed by colleagues at their host institution. A less intense, but still strong agreement (over 80%) was expressed with statements about sufficient professional support and social welcoming by the colleagues at the host institution. Respondents felt similarly about the benefit their stay had for gaining a whole range of useful skills. The Czech respondents agreed a little less (around 75%) that their stay in the US brought sufficient occasions for professional collaboration, helped them gain confidence, improved their ability to understand a multicultural environment, and established new, firm friendships. Roughly one half (52%) of the Czech respondents considered their Fulbright stay in the US to be the starting point for their studies or professional career. A relatively smaller number agreed that the US stay helped them to overcome prejudices against the new and the unknown (the comments revealed this is partly because the respondents had little such prejudice to start with) and that they met with greater cultural differences than they expected (see Chart 20a). An overwhelming majority of Czech respondents said they did not suffer from being separated from family, nor did they spend most of their free time with Czech friends and family.

There are differences in how much respondents agreed with prompts about the benefits of the grant for their personal life. These differences depended on the length of stay, time of stay, age of the respondent during the stay, the respondent’s gender, and whether they travelled alone or with family. On the other hand, there were no significant differences in how they evaluated the activities of the host institution. For example women completely agreed more often than men that the Fulbright stay helped them gain confidence, many useful skills, and firm new friendships, and that overall, it was a highly positive point in their life. Respondents who were between 22 and 29 during their grant and who went on a program for MA or Ph.D. intensively agreed more often than other age groups that thanks to the Fulbright Program, new horizons opened to them, they gained useful skills, understood multicultural environments, and launched their study or professional career. The longer the stay was, the more definitely the respondents agreed with the majority of the above-mentioned prompts, especially those stating that it was a crucial positive point, that it opened new horizons and that thanks to the stay in the US, they gained confidence and useful skills, launched their career, and established new friendships.
“My expectations in the professional area were high—and they were exceeded. My expectations for personal growth were minimal, yet here the development gave new direction to my personal life, my values, my faith, etc. In this sense the stay has been a crucial turning point in my life, for which I’m very grateful.” (form)

“The Fulbright grant has been an absolute turning point in my life. Although it did not meet my professional expectations, through my own fault, it exceeded them in all other areas. My husband and I have incorporated our US experience into our personal lives—we regularly send part of our income to selected charities; in reaction to the American consumerist way of life, we’ve moved to the countryside, where we grow our own fruit and vegetables; we use public transport as much as possible; we’re developing a goods-exchange community with our neighbors; and we’re planning to organize field trips for the public in the spring. Despite all the troubles I encountered in the US, I remember my stay there fondly and am grateful I had this opportunity. My colleagues were always friendly and nice to me there.” (form)

“It was an important opportunity to live in a different nation long enough to get to know in some detail how it functions at many different levels of life. This deeper understanding brings tolerance toward other nations.” (form)

Relatively positive traits of the stay also emerged during the in-depth interviews. The stay in the US was universally considered to be a unique life experience, whether the respondent went with family or alone. Repeatedly cited benefits were gaining confidence; absorbing the American energy, optimism, and courage to start new things/projects; and being more engaged and sharing more. For some, the work pace was an asset; others also valued the chance to spend more time with family or have peace for methodical work, for example finishing a dissertation, or writing a book, an article or similar. For some respondents, the stay’s benefits in the professional sphere manifested after several years, sometimes even in a different type of job or different position than the one they had during their stay. The fact that the stay in the US was an asset is seen in the conviction repeated by many respondents that it was thanks to Fulbright “they were able to get to where they are now.”

“My confidence just grew there. I think the American confidence is a bit infectious and contagious, and I caught it there.” (IDI)

“I brought back such unbelievable experience and such a large amount of knowledge and skills—all they had developed over the last twenty years—that it really accelerated me and boosted me.” (IDI)

“I became a part of the faculty, I could use the library and borrow books, I had access to all the digital sources, the host institution’s support was excellent and there was nothing to criticize, and the collaboration was interesting in that I realized how important it is to share ideas with others.” (IDI)
Chart 20a: Based on your experience, please rate to what extent you agree with the following propositions, concerning your stay in the USA (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Don’t really agree</th>
<th>Absolutely disagree</th>
<th>Average*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a positive point in my life.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It broadened my horizons.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt welcomed by colleagues from host institution.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me gain many new useful skills.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received enough expert support from colleagues at my host institution</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People from my host institution regularly invited me to their social events.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got to know life in multicultural environments.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It brought sufficient opportunities for professional collaboration.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It brought me new and stable friendships.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me gain confidence.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It started my professional and study career.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me overcome prejudices toward the new and the unknown.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The differences between Czech and American culture were bigger than I expected.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt lonely.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It brought me too long a separation from family and friends.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent most of the time in the USA with Czech friends and/or my family.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020

*Note: The average on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 = absolutely agree and 5 = absolutely disagree.

From the points of view of the American respondents, the benefits of their stay in the CR manifested above all in the arena of “everyday” life rather than professional life. The statement with which the respondents agreed the most often and the most intensively was the one stating that the Fulbright grant in the CR was a crucial, positive point in their life. Ninety-seven percent of the American respondents agreed with it, more than three quarters unequivocally (77%). The other areas in which the stay in the CR was firmly a benefit, i.e. the ones with which almost all respondents agreed (around 90%), had to do with broadening life horizons, understanding life in a multicultural environment, and establishing new, firm friendships. A somewhat smaller number (approx. 70%) of respondents agreed (less strongly) that the stay helped them acquire useful skills and gain confidence. When asked about relationships with colleagues at host institutions, such as acceptance, professional support, social openness, and sufficient opportunities for professional cooperation, American respondents agreed less readily (although more than half of them still did). Less than half of the American respondents (approx. 40%) agreed that the stay in the CR helped them kickstart their careers or overcome prejudices. Three in ten American respondents agreed that the difference between the Czech and American cultures was greater than they had expected, that they felt lonely during their stay, or that they spent most of their free time with expat friends or with their family. The American respondents did not agree overall that their stay brought too long a separation from their friends or family (see Chart 20b).

As among the Czech respondents, we can see differences between different subgroups of the American respondents. These concerned the answer “I totally agree.” Women, ETA program
alumni, and people who were 21 to 29 years old during their grant declared more often that their stay broadened their horizons, helped them understand life in a country with a different culture, and helped them gain confidence or useful skills. The respondents from the youngest age group and from the ETA program moreover agreed more often than other subgroups that the stay brought them long-term friendships and kickstarted their careers. The longer a stay was, the more the respondents agreed with all the above-mentioned benefits of the Fulbright Program in the CR.

The spontaneous comments in the questionnaires showed either that the Fulbright Program stay in the CR was an absolutely unique life experience, or that the respondents had to face minor or major inconveniences. Several respondents wrote that they were almost never invited to their Czech colleagues’ homes and that it was therefore difficult for them to establish social contacts; also, that the host institution environment (typically schools) was not very friendly.

“My Fulbright year counts as one of the best years of my life.” (form)

“This was honestly the best year of my life. I have many fond memories, and the network of professionals in both the Fulbright Commission and my host institute was welcoming and supportive.” (form)

“My Czech friends and colleagues were wonderful to me.” (form)

“The department members never invited us to social events. Few interacted with me. Having my wife with me saved me socially.” (form)

“It was difficult that Czech colleagues don’t invite guests to their home for dinner, etc. Only other expats did that (not necessarily US expats). So we spent time with other expats just because those were the invitations we received.” (form)
"I often felt like free labor for my host schools. There was little to no engagement with me beyond teaching." (form)

Chart 20b: Based on your experience, please rate to what extent you agree with the following prompts, concerning your stay in the CR, in %

- I completely agree
- Probably yes
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Don’t really agree
- Totally disagree

When we compare individual aspects of the Fulbright stay from the points of view of the Czech and American respondents, some differences emerge between the two groups. For American respondents, more than for Czech ones, the stay represented an exceptionally positive experience (77% vs. 61%) that helped them establish long-term friendships (62% vs. 41%) and understand life in a different cultural environment (56% vs. 37%). Czech respondents more often than American ones appreciated the host institution’s environment, reporting a warm welcome (58% vs. 46%), professional support (48% vs. 39%), or being involved in social activities with their colleagues (47% vs. 31%). Czech respondents also said more often than American ones that they gained useful skills thanks to their stay (48% vs. 38%) (see Chart 20c).


**Chart 20c:** Based on your experience, please rate to what extent you agree with the following prompts, concerning your USA/CR stay—USA/CR comparison (only “I absolutely agree” answers), (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a positive point in my life.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It broadened my horizons.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt welcomed by colleagues from my host institution.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received enough expert support of colleagues from host institution.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me gain many new useful skills.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People from my host institution regularly invited me to their social events.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It brought me new and stable friendships.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It offered enough opportunities for professional cooperation.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to understand life in multicultural environments.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me gain confidence.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It started my professional and study career.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me overcome prejudice toward the new and the unknown.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020

Given the findings above, it is not surprising that the Czech and American respondents differed in their overall evaluation of the Fulbright grant’s impact on their personal lives and professional/study careers. Although both groups unequivocally considered the impact of the Fulbright grant on their personal and professional lives to be positive, the Czech respondents significantly more often cited a positive effect on their career rather than their personal life (75% vs. 55% of “absolutely positive” answers). The American respondents slightly more often cited a strong, positive effect on their personal life, rather than on their career (73% vs. 66% of “absolutely positive” answers; see Chart 21). Only an insignificant percentage of respondents said that the stay had a negative impact on their life, personal or professional.
Chart 21: Looking back, what was the impact of your Fulbright stay on your career and on your personal life? CR/USA comparison (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On professional/study career</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On personal life</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Controlled for ‘I can’t really say’ answers, which held an insignificant share (approx. 1%).

“The impact that the Czech Republic and my ETA experience had on me is still being revealed every day. I often remember the lessons I learned in the Czech Republic of my self-discovery of confidence, learning from a new culture and my colleagues, and embracing new experiences with open arms. This has all proven very useful in my life’s new chapter as I begin my graduate studies here in the US during the coronavirus.” (form)

“I’m actually still here. I’ve moved to Prague, I’m working at a Czech company, and I’ve started a family with my Czech husband.” (form)

“I met my spouse, who is from Belgium, during my stay at the Summer Intensive Language Course. Thus the program indirectly influenced my personal life in a profound way. Though I have stronger ties with Belgian culture at this point, my marriage has created a strong international community of friends between Belgium, the US, and the Czech Republic, where my husband maintains close relationships. Our partnership has enriched our lives, and the lives of many close friends in these three countries.” (form)

“After returning from the US, I launched my professional career, in which I drew on contacts in the US, on experiences I’d had there. I also taught at a university part-time because I felt the need to pass on my new knowledge.” (form)

“The Fulbright stay had a positive impact on my whole family (5 people in all): life in the US, language skills, broader horizons, and stepping out of my comfort zone. Professionally: improvement outside of my field, a big improvement in soft skills, communication and presentation skills, and writing skills.” (form)

“The biggest impact this stay had on me was the realization that Czech primary education is good (at least in my experience) and that you have to trust in yourself and stick to your opinions. My host school was very bad at all levels. The impact of the US experience on my personal life is that I have learned to overcome obstacles.” (form)
C.3 Cultural transfer into the Czech/American environment

“Any international living experience helps one to better understand oneself.”

“I think learning to appreciate another culture allows us to see both the positive AND negative features of our home countries.”

Our survey also focused on the more complicated issue of cultural transfer. We tried to document this complex process by asking several questions. We tried to find out—while understanding we were simplifying matters—whether the stay abroad enabled the Fulbright grantees to view their culture from a distance, whether they were able to transfer some “American” cultural elements in the broadest sense to the Czech environment and vice versa, and whether their stay abroad inspired them to do some specific volunteer/charity activity in their cultural environment.

A long stay abroad generally allows people to see their culture of origin from a distance and look at it from a different perspective. It is therefore unsurprising that this premise was confirmed by the Fulbrighters, although Czech and American respondents’ sentiments differed slightly here. American respondents agreed more often and more strongly than Czech ones with the statement “My stay in the CR/US helped me better understand my culture and society.” Almost all the American respondents agreed that their stay in the CR helped them better understand American culture and society (96%); half of them agreed completely (52%). Czech respondents agreed with this less strongly. A significant majority of them did agree that their stay in the US helped them better understand their culture and society (87%) but only one third agreed unequivocally. One in ten Czech respondents did not agree with this statement (see Chart 22). Both groups of respondents confirmed our theory that the longer the stay abroad was, the stronger the agreement with this statement would be.

“I never realized how Americans were viewed by people outside of the United States. In many ways, the stereotypes that we are viewed as are entirely true. I often find myself cringing or annoyed by American culture now, even though I had only spent one year outside of the country.”

“I think my stay did help me understand my own culture and society better because I had such interesting conversations with my students/others and I gained a lot of insight from the questions they would ask me about the US, and also about how I would answer those questions!” (form)

“I can give you a metaphor here: ‘If you live your whole life in a smelly warmth, you don’t even realize it. But if you leave it and then return to it, then you do.’ Therefore the only negative aspect of my stay in the US was returning here and realizing how much better it could be.” (form)

“I realized even more how huge the social differences between Europe and the USA are.” (form)

“And this understanding of my culture became a very painful point of my return.” (form)
Chart 22: How strongly do you agree with the statement “My stay in the CR/US helped me better understand my culture and society.” (in percent)

On the one hand, a long-term stay abroad helps one to see one’s own culture from the outside, while on the other, it deepens connections with the local culture and society. After the return, it can even inspire the introduction of various cultural elements and customs from a different culture. Our survey looked for what the Fulbrighters brought back to their culture from their stay in the CR/US. The Czech respondents agreed the strongest and most readily with the declaration that the Fulbright Program enabled them to bring back openness towards new things and people (87%). Three fifths also agreed that after returning from the USA, they started paying more attention to activities connected with the social responsibility of organizations and institutions, for example organizing public lectures and involving students in volunteering activities (61%), and that they started organizing their studies/work better (60%). Nearly half of the respondents increased their involvement in public life, such as volunteering or charity work (45%), after their return. Czech respondents who had participated in these activities even before going to the US apparently did not feel much influence. They wrote in the comments in the online form (see below) that their stay in the US did not influence them very much in this regard. The same view was expressed by these respondents during in-depth interviews. It was clear however that involvement with a specific form of volunteer activity in the US translated directly into doing such an activity in the CR. The interviews implied that the extent to which respondents participated in volunteering or charity work in the US depended on the type of program, the length and place of stay, and their workload. Less than one quarter of Czech respondents felt that they had brought back from the US an effort to spend more time with family and friends (24%), to make paperwork in their job more efficient (22%) or to focus on separating their professional and private lives (17%). Meanwhile one quarter of them could not yet estimate the efficiency of paperwork in their job, or this question did not apply to them (see Chart 23a).
Chart 23a: Has your stay abroad influenced your life back in the CR? Have you transferred any of the following areas from the US to the CR? (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Probably not</th>
<th>Absolutely not</th>
<th>I cannot say yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(More) openness towards new things and people</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(More) emphasis on activities linked with social responsibility of organizations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better organization of work/study</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(More) involvement in public life / volunteering / charity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(More) time for family and friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making paperwork more efficient in the organization where you work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(More) emphasis on separating personal and work life</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020

“Given that I’ve been exposed to various language and cultural influences since a young age and that I went on the program in the US at a relatively advanced age, I don’t think it has influenced my personality very much. I was participating in these ‘more public’ activities even before going to the US. And I don’t think that Czech bureaucracy can be changed thanks to foreign experience.” (form)

“As a Fulbright-Masaryk program grantee, I had been active in volunteering and the NGO sector even before going to the US.” (form)

“With regard to administrative work: you know how to do things better, but only a fraction of this will go into practice. You’re lucky if you manage to push anything through, let alone apply it at any larger scale (in my case there wasn’t much like this, especially at the start). Or you can organize an activity alone or in a group of other people who also have experience with British or American administration.” (form)

The collection of questions about cultural transfer for the American respondents was a little different. We did not ask them about the social responsibility of organizations and institutions, but we did add two questions about the continuation of their contacts with Czech culture and sharing it back in the US. It turned out that contact with Czech culture was what almost all American respondents brought back from the CR (90%). A significant majority also agreed that after returning to the US, they continued sharing and spreading Czech culture in their social environments (84%). A similarly high percentage of American respondents agreed that they brought back from the CR a greater openness towards new people and things (82%); the numbers were similar for the Czech respondents. The cultural transfer from the CR to the US appeared to be less pronounced in other areas. This is mainly due to the high number of respondents who said these areas did not apply to them or that they could not yet tell. Two fifths of American respondents (44%) felt they had transferred a better organization of their studies/work from the CR to the US. Roughly one third of them began (or increased) participation in public life or volunteering (34%). About three in ten American respondents brought back a greater focus on separating private and professional
life or a focus on spending time with friends and family. The American respondents least often agreed that their stay helped them perform administrative tasks more efficiently when they returned to the US (27%). Two fifths of them stated they could not assess this area or it did not apply to them (see Chart 23b).

“I was already highly involved with family and public life, so that didn’t change. However, I was encouraged to continue those activities.” (form)

“I learned many new things, most importantly that in some ways the Czechs did some things better than my fellow Americans.” (form)

“I learned a great deal about different ways that universities are organized, and that has been valuable.” (form)

“I introduced “utopence” to so many colleagues and the gift keeps on giving.” (form)

“I applied to be an ETA after studying abroad in Prague and becoming interested in Czech language, culture, history, and politics. My Fulbright year was not the conclusion of these interests, it continued and strengthened my enthusiasm for all things Czech. I am so grateful to have had this experience and to still feel close to my ETA friends, Czech friends, and to Czech culture.” (form)

Chart 23b: Has your stay abroad influenced your life back in the US? Have you transferred any of the following areas from the CR to the US? (in percent)

The above findings show that roughly half of the Czech respondents brought back a greater involvement in public life, volunteering, or charity work (52%). The inspiration to do a specific volunteering activity based on their American experience was nevertheless declared by “only” three in ten Czech respondents (see Chart 24). This could be due to the above-mentioned fact that some respondents were already involved in volunteering before going to the US (and were not seeking inspiration for a new activity). The span of activities that came from this inspiration is large: from regular donations to NGOs (“I send money to an organization that provides food to disadvantaged single mothers”) to volunteering (“a volunteer program
at the Thomayer hospital, charity events addressing students and colleagues”) to founding their own projects (“we launched community activities for our community of neighbors”) and starting new associations, NGOs, or private companies (“founding an NGO that connects academia with the local administration and the public”).

Among the American respondents, two fifths (43%) got involved (or more involved) in public life, volunteering, or charity work after their return from the CR. Two thirds of American respondents declared having joined in a volunteer activity or initiated one during their stay in the CR (see Chart 24). These were usually voluntary and/or free English courses/lessons for children, students, or adults. It was also mentioned that the potential for volunteering is very limited in the CR (compared to the US). The question here then is to what extent these limited types of volunteering are transferrable to the US. The respondents who declared having participated in volunteering in the CR were most often those who came to the CR between 2013 and 2020 and were ETA program respondents. In this situation, community participation by grantees is a fixed part of the program and is planned in advance.

“My husband formed a bridge club with several adoring old ladies in a pub! They met weekly for the whole year and had us to dinner many times. In many ways, they made us understand the people we wanted to be, showing us so much warmth and hospitality. I also taught Italian classes occasionally at a friend’s newly formed language school and tutored some factory managers in English once a week. We also put out the word that we wanted to learn to make svickova and MANY women invited us over for informal cooking classes, which in turn led to us hosting families in our flat for dinners and holidays.” (form)

“I ran a weekly English conversation club with students, and I volunteered with the Prison Fellowship and participated in a rehabilitation program inside prison.” (form)

“We were surprised that there were virtually no opportunities for volunteers. My wife did find it possible to teach English, and we did study Czech.” (form)

Chart 24: Did the American way of volunteering and the community life inspire you to take part in a specific activity of the same type in the CR? Did you take part in any voluntary activities or initiate such activities during your stay in the Czech Republic? (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
C.4 Overall satisfaction with the stay

“In retrospect, I think the stay was a great opportunity for the whole family. Professionally, I will be applying the results of my research for years to come.”

“It was such a wonderful experience with the country, the people, and the culture. It is a highlight of my life.”

Most of the findings above, such as whether respondents’ expectations were met, or the ratings for specific benefits, showed that the stay abroad was a well-appreciated (personal and/or professional) experience and that it met or exceeded respondents’ expectations. It is therefore not surprising that the overall satisfaction with Fulbright stays in the US or the CR was very high, despite the challenging periods of leaving, arriving, and returning that respondents mentioned. **The average approval rating on a ten-point scale**, where one means absolutely satisfied and ten means absolutely dissatisfied, **was 1.8. Almost half of both the Czech and American respondents were absolutely satisfied with their stay abroad.** Some level of dissatisfaction, i.e. a rating below 5 points, was expressed by a mere 8% of Czech and 6% of American respondents (see Chart 25).

**Chart 25:** Overall satisfaction with the stay. CR/USA comparison (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Average from values 1 to 10, where 1 = completely satisfied and 10 = absolutely dissatisfied. The legend cites sums for values 3 through 5 and 6 through 10, as the representation of individual categories was very low.

“I very much appreciate the opportunity to go abroad, although the beginning of my stay in the US was difficult. It was an invaluable experience, and I would make the same decision today without hesitation. I met amazing people and a new world, and my relationships are now so much better than ever before. At work it’s better too. I gained new experience, confidence—in English, in communication with my superiors, and even with people I don’t know. My approach and attitude towards students have changed as well. My personal life is now completely different.” (form)
In the comments, there were also some reproofs concerning various aspects of the stay. Greater dissatisfaction usually concerned the attitude of host institutions, as we saw in the comments but also heard in interviews of other experiences (see below). Other upsetting experiences apparently didn’t have any strong impact on the overall satisfaction of respondents as they did not concern the Fulbright Program directly, but are a usual part of a stay abroad. These include difficulties finding accommodation (especially short-term), higher expenses at the beginning of stay, etc.

“I don’t want to sound ungrateful, but it did surprise me that you would examine the candidates so very thoroughly and then send them to a school of questionable quality. My stay in the US was very instructive, I got to know the culture, I travelled and made new friends. But the work at the school itself was awful, and having my American colleague at our Czech school was exhausting for all my peers. But I don’t regret anything; the experience was invaluable and a great asset for my career.” (form)

“I recommended the Fulbright program to many but not to apply to ČR unless they had already visited there. I’m the only alumni I know who didn’t have a positive experience in their host country. I do believe it was because of the particular Faculty I was assigned to.” (form)
C.5 The prestige of a Fulbright grant

One particular area was mentioned by many Czech respondents, and that was the difference in prestige of Fulbright grants in the CR and in the US. Being a Fulbright grantee in the US was a powerful experience, described frequently by the Czech respondents in their comments and in the in-depth interviews. They recalled that the very fact of their being a Fulbright Program grantee in the US “opened doors” for them, even in places that had nothing to do with their host institution. In the Czech environment, on the other hand, the prestige of the Fulbright Program is connected almost exclusively with academia—and even here opinions about the awareness of Fulbright grants differed.

“The prestige of the Fulbright Program and the Fulbrighter by extension is underestimated in the CR. I was really surprised by the importance it carries in the US, where the program is known even to people not directly connected with universities.” (form)

“It opens doors for you. They think you must be a genius, because it’s an exchange program, and the Americans who apply for this program go through an extremely demanding process and have to meet such extreme requirements. They therefore think that you went through such a process too, and the expectations they have of you when you arrive are enormous. So that is a commitment, but it also opens doors… the thing is that you are a part of something bigger, some community, something real, something that transcends you, something you can be proud of. It is a sort of an elite club, in a good sense.” (IDI)

“I believe [the Fulbright grant] is a very elite thing in a way, and people who are considering it do get the information they need, such as through their contact network, which was my case. That is the best way—when you’re informed by an acquaintance or someone. I don’t think it should be advertised anywhere, that’s unnecessary and would devalue it.” (IDI)

“In the US, when I was asked why I came there, and I said I was a Fulbrighter, everything was suddenly clear… In the Czech environment, it depends very much on whether you’re asking about Fulbright in a university environment… I mean if someone in academia doesn’t know what a Fulbright grant is, maybe they should be working elsewhere.” (IDI)
D Perceptions of the Fulbright Commission

D.1 Evaluation of the Fulbright Commission’s work

“The Commission was very welcoming and helped to make my Fulbright year so successful.”

“I’d like to thank you for the great job you are doing. The Fulbright and my internship was the best year of my life.”

The Fulbright Commission’s work was rated as very satisfactory by the vast majority of both Czech and American respondents (90% and 82% respectively; see Chart 26). Among the Czech respondents, there was only one negative evaluation; there were only two in the American group. The high satisfaction was attested by the many grateful comments in the online forms. They praised the Commission’s communication, flexibility, problem-solving efforts, and very good coordination of the stay in general. Appreciation was expressed by the American group even more strongly than by the Czech one.

“I am absolutely satisfied with the work of the Fulbright Commission in the CR—before my arrival, with the organization of my journey, and with the collaboration many years after my return. The stay exceeded my expectations, I was absolutely satisfied, I still benefit from it today.” (form)

“I am very thankful for the support I received from the Czech office, although I was on a Fulbright Schuman program. The support by the office in Brussels on the other hand was very bad, and their inactivity caused several serious complications during my stay. Thank you to everyone in the Prague office and I wish you many successful grantees in the future.” (form)

“I was absolutely satisfied with the service provided by the Fulbright Commission: before going abroad, with their care during my stay and with managing critical moments during the time of corona. Arranging the charter flight back home was a cherry on top. I am giving them eleven points out of ten.” (form)

“The Czech F.C. is phenomenal. Whatever you pay them, double it. ;)” (form)

“Dear Fulbright Staff, I want to thank you for doing the work you do. I would imagine that the amount of paperwork, the red tape, the crises that arise, and the difficult personalities involved in this work might sometimes be overwhelming. Please know that you are changing lives, mindsets, and futures for the better and that every single part of your work makes an impact in ways you can never imagine.”
Some of the Czech respondents wrote suggestions or ideas for future stays in the comments section:

Looking back, the respondents saw some “downsides” of a short stay: it is more difficult to find accommodation, the initial expenses of a stay are very high, there is a lot of paperwork, etc.

“My family and I spent four months in the US. Given certain things, I regretted not applying for a longer stay. The first was the trouble finding accommodation. Securing a rental for four people for only 4.5 months was a problem. If it had been for at least 6 months, there would have been more options. Money was another thing. I received money for four months, and meanwhile the initial expenses were the largest (air tickets, furniture, etc.). If we’d gone for longer, these expenses would have covered a longer period, and maybe we wouldn’t have had to use our savings to finance our stay.” (form)

“The only part of the program that I considered to be unbalanced was the allocation/distribution of funds. The greatest expenses the grantees have are the initial ones, and at the start you use the first portion of the money fairly quickly. In my case, I had to cover a rather huge part of the initial expenses with my own money. So, I suggest making the first part of the money more than half of the total sum, 60% would be ideal, at least for the long programs over six months.” (form)

“For my short three-months stay in the US on a Fulbright-Masaryk grant, the amount of paperwork (administrative work needed for the grant procedure and the stay itself) was barely tolerable. Although I do understand it was probably indispensable. For this reason, a longer stay makes more sense.” (form)

Some respondents would have appreciated more specific information about the host institutions; some appreciated having received just that.

“In the era of exchange programs for high-school teachers (which probably aren’t available anymore), I think some sort of pedagogical training and information about the American school system would have been useful, even including some examples (i.e., how schools operate, evaluation, classroom management, etc.) plus better organization of the orientation in Washington. It was unclear there when we would get key information.” (form)
“Looking back, I think I would have appreciated an opportunity to speak personally with someone about the universities to choose from in the US. My decision was based mainly on reading about them and on what I had heard from others. If the Fulbright Commission could organize talks with people who have actually studied there, and they would explain the structure and give a basic description of the universities, that would be very helpful. Especially for the grantees who are going to the US for the first time. Personal experience is invaluable!” (form)

“The experience was great, and the commission bent over backward to help us. I think some applicants expect too much to be given and set up when they apply, when it’s all more or less what you make of it. However, an outline of the expectations or requirements each school has for an ETA should be brought to the orientation so that the commission can meet with the ETA and school before the year begins, to keep everyone on the same page.” (form)

Some respondents recommended that future grantees also think about the fact that the return home can be hard.

“I think one thing that didn’t occur to me, and that isn’t given much space at the orientation or anywhere, is the fact that the return home can be hard for the grantee. For me personally, this was the most difficult part. I really wanted to go, it was a sort of escape from the swamp of the Czech academic bubble. I really enjoyed it, I established many new contacts, and to be honest, I didn’t miss home. On the contrary, the return was hard. To be honest, I didn’t really want to come back, and there was nothing much to come back for. I tried to keep as much as I could of the US with me, to keep up the ‘American spirit,’ but what with the pandemic, it’s difficult to keep up good contacts (online conferences are no substitute). So this is to suggest that besides preparation for a possible culture shock and anxiety upon arrival to the US, for someone who likes it there, the culture shock and anxiety upon returning to the CR can be a real problem too.” (form)

There were reproofs among the American respondents for overlooking the racial prejudices of host institutions and for insufficient support in seeking accommodation:

“One comment on the commission—there were concerns about the addressing of equity and racism during my time as a Fulbright grantee. I don’t know how things have changed, but I hope it’s become more central to orientation and support for grantees of color.” (form)

“It was an amazing experience, and had a profound impact on my children especially. The main things that were disappointing were: not much help from Fulbright in securing housing or getting information about schools for our children; and not getting much support from Czech faculty, especially the head of the program.” (form)

“I think more cultural bias training during orientation would have helped. Understanding the obvious differences between Czech and American culture upfront, would have better prepared me for some of the harassment/opinions I encountered. I acknowledge these things could have happened in any country, but knowing them upfront from the Commission would have been beneficial.” (form)
D.2 Interest in contact with the Commission and other alumni

“On my next visit to Prague I will stop by the office with greetings and updates. Also, I am willing to serve as a liaison here in the US when needed.”

“I think that the Fulbright Commission is very professional, and has a social overlap, so it is a pleasure to communicate with them not only about the things that concern the grant stay.”

The interest in staying touch with the Commission was a little higher than the interest in contact with other Fulbright Program alumni. **Approximately two thirds of the Czech respondents (65%) were interested in staying in touch with the Commission, and six in ten with other Fulbrighters.** The numbers were very similar among the American respondents, where **seven in ten respondents** would welcome contact with the Czech Fulbright Commission, and **six in ten** would like contact with other grantees from programs in the CR (see Chart 27).

“I’m in Prague and it would be nice if there were a post-fulbright network where we could potentially connect with others geographically and see what they worked on (if they were Fulbright-Hays scholars in any case).” (form)

**Chart 27:** Interest in staying in touch with the Fulbright Commission in the CR, with other Fulbright Program alumni*, CR and US comparison (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the Commission</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CZ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other Fulbright programs alumni</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CZ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
*Note: The question in the English version of the online form being “…with other US Fulbright Alumni who had their grants in the Czech Republic?”
A higher interest in keeping in touch with other Czech Fulbrighters was expressed by women, younger respondents (26 to 40 years), those who had returned recently (seven years ago or less, i.e. 2013 to 2020), respondents from Prague, and those who had gone to the US on a program for MA or Ph.D. students. Respondents over 50 years old more often did not know whether they cared for more contact. In the American respondents group, younger respondents (ages 40 and younger) were more interested in contact, as were those recently returned and those from the ETA program.

D.3 Communication channels

The alumni universally preferred keeping in touch by meeting personally at events and/or receiving information through group e-mails. Facebook was the next most preferred form of communication after group e-mails. Only a small number of respondents preferred other platforms, typically Instagram—Americans more often than Czechs. The numbers were very similar for the methods that respondents preferred for communication with the Fulbright Commission in the CR and for communication between Czech and American respondents. The only difference was between group e-mails and meeting in-person at bigger events as the number one preference (see Charts 28a and 28b).

| Chart 28a: Preferred channels of communication with other alumni, CR/US comparison (in percent) |

- **Meeting in person at organized events**: CR 64%, USA 65%
- **Sending information through group e-mail**: CR 63%, USA 70%
- **Facebook (FB)**: CR 37%, USA 40%
- **LinkedIn**: CR 29%, USA 22%
- **Fulbrighter App**: CR 16%, USA 22%
- **Twitter**: CR 8%, USA 4%
- **Instagram**: CR 4%, USA 4%
- **Other**: CR 2%, USA 3%
- **None**: CR 4%, USA 4%

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Controlled for respondents who are not interested in staying in touch
“I especially appreciate the endeavors to keep and strengthen existing links between this Program’s alumni—regular meetings at the American Embassy, further education programs (Fulbright Alumni Grants), and the Media Literacy Conference in Kiev in 2018, which inspired me to introduce a Media Literacy subject among the English classes at our school and to spread awareness among colleagues... I personally wish to continue benefiting from the programs the Fulbright Commission offers, because up until now, my experience with them has been positive and useful.” (form)

“The cultural attaché of the American Embassy comes to Olomouc sometimes. We met twice, and it was very nice. He always invites the Olomouc Fulbrighters; there are many of these. It’s nice that he wants to meet and that he visits us. I’m in touch with people who were in the US at the same time as me, with the colleague with whom I had the Proshek grant, with the colleague who came after me…” (IDI)

“It seems like a lot of effort to keep up with Fulbright-related alumni events, and none of the other Fulbrighters in my cohort were really close to me during the stay, and we didn’t do things professionally together. Perhaps one way to encourage people to stay connected as alumni would be to encourage them to collaborate during their Fulbright grant period / in-country stay.” (form)

**Chart 28b**: Preferred channels of communication with the Fulbright Commission, CR and US comparison (in percent)

Source: Fulbright Alumni CZ 2020, Fulbright Alumni USA 2020
Note: Controlled for respondents who are not interested in staying in touch
E. Alumni Responses in 2007 and in 2020—Comparison

We already mentioned in the first chapter that the Czech Fulbright Commission commissioned the first alumni survey in 2007. The questionnaire was then completed by 80 Czech alumni out of 450 and 80 Slovak alumni out of 160. Some of the 2007 questions were used in this survey in the same or a slightly altered wording. This chapter summarizes the similarities and differences in the two surveys for the Czech alumni.

The evaluation of the Fulbright Commission’s work was significantly better in 2020 than in 2007, though it was very good even then. In this survey 90% of the respondents rated the Commission’s work as very satisfactory and 8% as satisfactory, whereas in 2007, 70% of respondents rated it as very satisfactory and 30% as satisfactory.

As regards grantee expectations, in 2007, the survey primarily observed whether professional/work expectations were met, whereas in 2020, overall expectations from the stay abroad were surveyed. In both instances, however, more than half of the respondents said their (professional) expectations were exceeded, and for roughly another two fifths, their expectations were met. The respondents’ evaluations show that the Fulbright Program still retains its high quality.

In 2007, seven in ten respondents noted having established new work contacts, whereas in 2020, the establishing of new work contacts during the stay in the US was cited by more than nine in ten respondents.

Long-term collaboration based on these newly established contacts, whether with a particular expert or with an institution, was confirmed by roughly four fifths (79%) of respondents in 2007. Almost the same number of respondents (71%) declared having established such collaborations in 2020 (22% said no long-term collaboration was established, and for 7%, it was too early to tell). We can therefore conclude that the in-country stay still promotes international collaboration very efficiently, including in the long-term.

The reach of each Fulbrighter’s community is much larger today than it was in 2007. However, the number of in-person contacts with other Fulbright alumni is apparently not very different. In 2007, over one half of respondents (55%) declared they knew two or more other alumni, and roughly two fifths said they knew more than three alumni (38%), whereas 3% knew only one and 5% did not know any other Fulbrighters. These are basically the same results as shown in the 2020 survey. About one half of the respondents (51%) knew two or three other Fulbright Program alumni, either from the CR or elsewhere. Nearly two fifths personally knew three or more alumni (36%), whereas 8% knew only one other Fulbrighter and 5% of the respondents did not know any. Personal social contacts stayed at the same considerable level, at least quantitatively.

Judging from the 2007 and 2020 results, employers’ attitudes upon finding out that a respondent was leaving for a grant to the US did not change significantly between the two surveys. Both showed that in most cases, the employer was accommodating. The grantee reported support from their employer in going abroad in 70% and 63% of responses, respectively. The employer did not interfere in the grantee’s decision to go abroad for 11% and 20% of employed respondents, respectively. Significant complications faced 3% and 4% of respondents, before departure, and 4% of them said they were made to terminate
employment in both surveys. In the 2020 survey, respondents who travelled abroad in recent years (i.e., between 2013 and 2020) said they were supported by employers more often than others. This may be caused by the employers’ attitudes changing towards greater support for their employees’ professional development, even in the form of programs abroad, and probably also by the growing prestige of Fulbright grants.

Judging from the results from 2007 and 2020, employers’ behavior after a respondent’s return from their stay abroad was almost the same. Roughly half of the respondents declared that they did not notice any difference in their employers’ behavior. Roughly three in ten met with a positive reaction, wherein their employer gave them the opportunity to apply their experiences from the US in practice.
Program Description

**Fulbright Student Program for Czech and American students**

The program is open to those who have finished at least their Bachelor’s degree. The program offers an opportunity to study at a university for a degree or as a non-degree student, or to work on a research project. The length of the scholarship offered is one academic year (9 to 10 months). This program is financed by both governments. Since 2000, Czech student researchers may also apply for the Fulbright-Masaryk award.

**Fulbright Scholar Program for Czech and American Scholars**

Scholars can apply in one of three categories: research, lecturing, or research/lecturing. The length of the stay can be from 3 to 10 months. For Czech applicants, the host institution is usually an American university, although it may be in some cases a research laboratory outside the university system. For U.S. scholars, the Czech host institution is typically a Czech university or an institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences. This program is financed by both governments. Since 2000, Czech researchers may also apply for the Fulbright-Masaryk award.

**Fulbright-Masaryk Program (since 2000)**

A program offering Czech researchers the opportunity to work on a project at a U.S. university. The grantees are selected in three categories (pre-doc, post-doc, and senior) and based on their projects they spend three to ten months at a U.S. university of their choice. The program emphasizes not only the academic excellence of the applicants but at the same time examines their civic engagement. This program is financed by the Czech government.

**Fulbright-Masaryk Program for NGO Leaders (since 2007)**

Based on the need to professionalize the work of non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic, and taking into consideration the breadth, quality, and tradition of American non-profit organizations, the Commission opened this program for NGO leaders, who can deepen their knowledge either at a U.S. university as non-degree students or researchers or through an internship at a corresponding non-profit organization. The grantees typically spend three months (in several cases, five or six) in the U.S. The program is financed by grants from the U.S. Embassy in the Czech Republic (for several years it was also co-financed by CEE Fund).

**Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence Program**

The Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence (S-I-R) Program assists U.S. higher education institutions in expanding their programs of academic exchange. By supporting non-U.S. scholars through grants for teaching at institutions that might not have a strong international component, it lets both the U.S. institution and the scholar grantee benefit. The program is fully financed by the U.S. government.

**Fulbright Specialist Program (since 2001)**

A short-term program for American scholars, giving Czech institutions (universities, libraries, and non-profits) the opportunity to invite specialists for 2 to 6 weeks to lecture, consult, and prepare joint programs. The program is co-financed by the Czech host institution and the U.S. Department of State.
**Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Program (former Fulbright Distinguished Chair)**

The Czech Commission has entered into agreements with several Czech universities leading to the introduction and co-financing of this program, which offers the most prestigious Fulbright awards for American scholars: Masaryk University (Faculty of Social Sciences) 2009; Charles University (Faculty of Mathematics and Physics) 2013; Czech Technical University (Faculty of Electrical Engineering) 2013; Palacky University (Faculty of Arts) 2014 (open since 2019 to all faculties of Palacky University).

**Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (since 2005)**

Drawing from the U.S. student program, Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) help improve language acquisition at Czech secondary schools throughout the country. ETAs assist Czech teachers in English lessons and offer their own extracurricular activities. The program is financed by both governments; a fundamental expansion of the program since 2016/2017 is being financed by the Czech Ministry of Education. Thanks to this substantial support 30 English Teaching Assistants arrive every year.

**Fulbright Summer Institutes in American Studies (since 1999)**

Czech university teachers can apply for summer institutes, which are open in several fields each year. The first round of selections is organized by the Fulbright Commission; the applications of the finalists are subsequently sent to the Department of State for final selections. Czech applicants have been very successful in the international competition, especially in certain fields. For the fourth year running, young students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds can participate in Summer Institutes of Social or Environmental Entrepreneurship.

**Proshek-Fulbright Fellowship (since 1998)**

Together with the Charles E. Proshek Foundation, the Czech Fulbright Commission started offering this scholarship in 1998. It is designed for medical doctors and enables them to spend several months at the University of Minnesota Medical School, pursuing their research projects in cooperation with U.S. colleagues. In recent years, this scholarship opens up when there is sufficient funding available, usually once every two years.

**Fulbright-Schuman Fellowship (since 2010)**

The Fulbright-Schuman Program, administered by the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States and Belgium, is jointly financed by the U.S. State Department and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. The program funds graduate and post-graduate study, research, and lecture proposals in the fields of US-EU relations, EU policy, and EU institutions for interested American and EU citizens.

**Other Programs**

**Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship (1992-2013)**

This program was transferred to the Commission from the U.S. Embassy, which had administered it in previous years. Based on the development of the Czech Republic, the program was closed in 2013, as the country was no longer classified as a developing country. The special feature of this program was that it was open to applicants working in the state administration and the non-profit sector; the program was a combination of a one year non-degree study at a U.S. university with an internship at an organization corresponding to the Fellow’s domestic employer. The program was fully financed by the U.S. Department of State and was suspended by the U.S. side.
A one-year program within which Czech and American teachers exchanged positions. In many cases, the grantees also exchanged their houses/apartments and took their whole families. Most of the teachers were teaching English (or English as a second language); several taught at bilingual schools in the Czech Republic in other subjects. The program was mostly financed by the U.S. Department of State and was suspended by the U.S. side.

This exchange program was open to administrators of secondary schools on the Czech side and secondary or post-secondary administrators on the U.S. side. For six weeks, the Czech administrator shadowed his/her American colleague in the United States, then for six weeks the American colleague was hosted in the Czech Republic and was shown the Czech educational system. The program was mostly financed by the U.S. Department of State and was suspended by the U.S. side.

Fulbright Science and Technology Fellowship (2006–2009)
A U.S. initiative opened competition in STEM fields to applicants for Ph.D. studies at U.S. universities, offering special funding on a very competitive basis. The selection of the grantees was performed by the Department of State, and success in this worldwide competition was very prestigious. On the other hand, when looking at the percentage of grantees who have fulfilled the Fulbright legacy by returning to their home country, the Science and Technology Fellowship ranks last. Of the three Czech grantees, just one returned to the Czech Republic, while the other two remained in the U.S.A. despite the two-year home residency requirement.

Some of the initiatives we started were only justifiable for a limited period of time. This applies for the travel grants the Commission was offering in situations when extra funding was available in its budget and in years when partial travel funding could make significant difference when deciding about a stay at a U.S. university. Currently, students can usually request funding from their home universities (within their free movers budgets), and scholars can use their own grants for international travel.

Central and Eastern European Graduate Fellowship (1994)
This special program for Central and Eastern Europe offered one year or longer of studies for graduate students. The program was designed to help the transition to democracy and a free market economy. The program was fully financed by the U.S. Department of State and was designed as short-term assistance for developing economies.

Fulbright/APSA Congressional Fellowship Program (2004)
Offered in cooperation with the American Political Science Association, this fellowship was a program combining research at an American university with an internship in the U.S. Congress. The fellowship was open to candidates from different countries in different years; the Czech Republic was on the list of eligible ones just once, in 2004.

Fulbright New Century Scholar Program (2007)
This pilot program bringing together scholars from many countries focused on the future of higher education was offered once and was fully financed by the U.S. government.