The Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act — also known as the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) was signed by President George H.W. Bush on October 24, 1992, to enable a consolidated U.S. approach to provide assistance to Eurasian countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The State Department’s Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (EUR/ACE) is tasked with coordinating and managing foreign assistance programs authorized under FSA.

FSA was created to support the democratic and free market transitions of countries from the former Soviet Union. The objective of U.S. assistance to these countries has been to help them far enough along toward becoming market-based democracies that they can complete the journey themselves.

**Budget and Activities**

Over the span of two decades, EUR/ACE has coordinated more than $41 billion in U.S. government-wide assistance funding for the Eurasia and Central Asia region. Currently, U.S. government assistance under the FREEDOM Support Act is approximately $430 million annually for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

**Significant accomplishments include:**

- Deployment of over $4.9 billion in humanitarian aid helped stabilize numerous vulnerable and conflict-ridden areas. Pioneering the use of “public-private partnerships” before the term became fashionable, the FSA humanitarian program now leverages private sector and Department of Defense excess commodity donations at a ratio of 15:1.

- Non-proliferation and other security and law-enforcement programs secured weapons of mass destruction and helped to redirect former Soviet nuclear scientists to civilian careers.

- FSA-funded technical assistance in trade, finance, agriculture, anti-corruption and other areas helped six FSA countries on their paths to full membership in the World Trade Organization.

- Over the last 20 years the U.S. has supported private-sector development — including small-business development — in the countries of the former Soviet Union by providing over $2 billion in technical assistance and micro-credit financing to entrepreneurs.
• U.S. assistance has supported civic activism, civil society development, and a legislative environment that enables civil society to operate freely. Since the beginning of FSA support, the number of registered NGOs in Eurasia and Central Asia has increased exponentially, now totaling over 350,000.

• FSA programs have helped dramatically reduce maternal and child mortality, address epidemics, and demonstrate effective approaches to controlling tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

Innovations and Best Practices:
FSA has funded many innovative practices beyond traditional development assistance to promote and support each FSA country’s transition to a stable democracy and market economy.

• Alumni of FSA-sponsored professional and educational fellowships and exchanges recall transformative experiences. They were often the first in their countries to travel to the west. Programs like the high school Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program and the graduate level Muskie Fellows were first developed with FSA funding and helped foster new cultural understanding and good will. Many alumni of these exchanges have become leaders in business, government and civil society.

• Enterprise Funds investing in small businesses instill best market practices, and attract additional capital and produce returns on investment.

• Donor leveraging and private-public partnerships have maximized limited resources.

• FSA-funded programs like the Special American Business Internship Training (SABIT) program, the Business Information Services for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS) program and the American Business Centers helped create opportunities for U.S. exporters in these emerging economies.

• Democracy Commission small grants have enabled targeted local NGOs working in civil society, human rights and media to leverage resources and best practices to eventually become self-sustaining. Programs modeled on the Democracy Commission were later developed for use in other countries around the world.

Top left: U.S. assistance helps farmers increase productivity through better financing, links to consumers and post-harvest processing. Top right: FREEDOM Support Act funds provide technical assistance and financial support to the American University in Central Asia. Below: A U.S.-sponsored health program in Ukraine promotes greater tolerance for those living with HIV/AIDS.