

EISENHOWER FELLOWSHIPS – 2009 Multi Nation Program
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Mihai Ghyka
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As General Manager of Anheuser Busch-Inbev Romania, Mihai Ghyka was responsible for the fastest growing company in its industry, coordinating the investment of \$200 million as well as overseeing a \$300 million turnover. He stepped down from this position in order to pursue his passion of raising advertising standards in Romania through the International Advertising Association. While on fellowship, Mr. Ghyka sought to add value to the Branding Romania project by meeting with leaders in marketing, communications and governmental affairs. Through the Branding Romania project, he plans to improve Romania's image to attract new investments, increase tourism, and increase exports of Romanian goods.

Mr. Ghyka gleaned information on branding, marketing and strategic communication from business, academia, government and nongovernmental organizations while on his fellowship. A key component in understanding how Romania should ultimately position and brand itself was to gain insight into the "American brand." Mr. Ghyka was struck by the presence of the American flag in front of schools, post offices and the playing of the national anthem at sporting events. This was a key revelation for Mr. Ghyka—a large part of the branding of a region or nation is the pride of the area's population. Mr. Ghyka also witnessed and was impressed by the immense brand of the new American President, Barack Obama, throughout his travels.

At academic institutions such as Cornell University and cultural institutions like the Romanian Cultural Institute and Embassy of Romania in the United States, Mr. Ghyka explored the perception of Romania among U.S. citizens. He found that there was largely no perception or knowledge of Romania by the average American, an important finding and determination in the development of a branding strategy. A visit to Harvard's Institute of Competitiveness and Strategy provided one of the most important realizations for Mr. Ghyka regarding the Branding Romania project: Country branding cannot be considered separately from the country's economic development, business environment, and foreign policy. A comprehensive plan that incorporates all of these components must be considered.

Mr. Ghyka visited a number of regional marketing and visitor's bureaus to explore how various cities and regions within the U.S. market themselves. He also visited two of the national's leading advertising agencies in order to gain insight into their models and their immense success. The unanimous opinion of those with whom Mr. Ghyka met across all sectors was that for a country with a non-existent image, a famous image over global media (a movie was suggested) helps immeasurably, as it peaks curiosity and interest for the country.

Of his fellowship, Mr. Ghyka described his fellowship experience as being an "inspirational moment in my life." He plans to keep his experience alive by publishing articles about his experience to address the topics of national branding, economic crisis, and social observation. He will continue the conversations begun in the U.S. regarding the creation of a branding strategy for Romania and raising the county's profile on the international scene.