

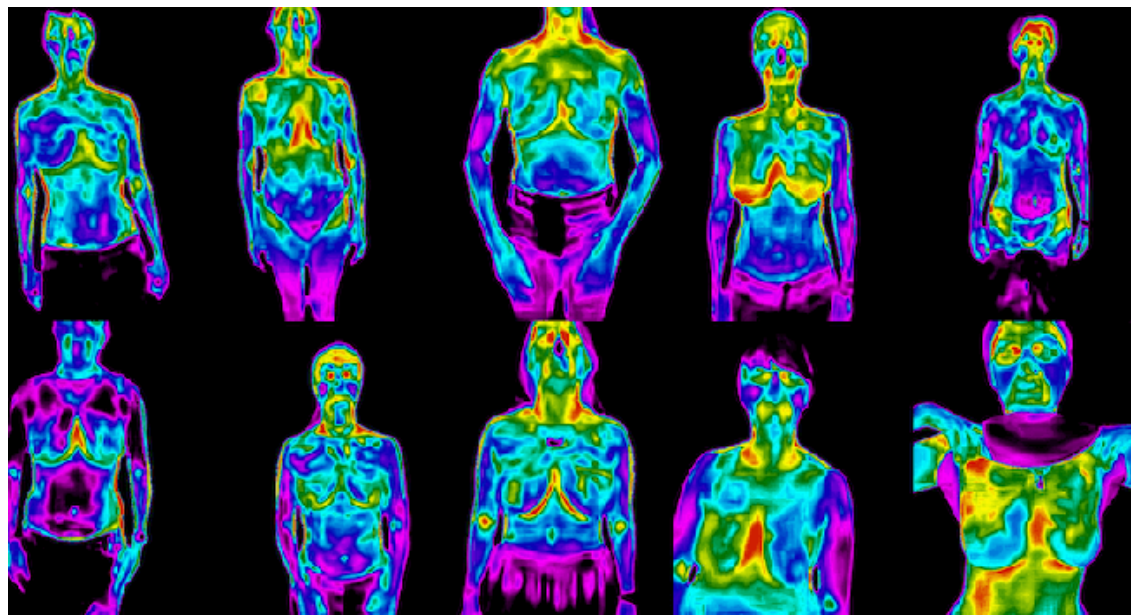
Dear Friends,

Looking back over the year, I am reminded of the expression, “May you live in interesting times.” This ironic quote is repeated often by my Bulgarian friends, and I think we can all agree that we could do with a little less “interesting” and unpredictability.

Each of us has been impacted by the challenges of Covid-19, whether through a personal loss or through diminished contact with our families, our friends, and our workplaces. Fortunately, the availability of vaccines returned a semblance of normalcy and a glimpse into a future in which handshakes won't be frowned upon and we will no longer need to keep loved ones at arm's length.

While challenges persist, there are causes for celebration. Here are a few bright spots from the ABF community:

Through our [Next 10 program](#), we are partnering with dozens of young entrepreneurs who are working on scientific solutions to longstanding problems such as plastic pollution, agricultural uncertainty, and inadequate access to health care.



Kevin Health's mobile screening tool uses a thermal camera to identify disease

It was humbling to see our partners in the nonprofit field successfully pivot their work to better serve those in need. We also drew inspiration from [participants in our entrepreneurship program, Business Academy for Starting Entrepreneurs](#). Not only were new businesses born and grown with the program's help — a number of them flourished, despite the odds.

No less impressive were the joint efforts of the dozens of organizations and countless individuals who enabled [the return to life of the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis](#), a symbol of continuity and transcultural understanding.



The restored Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis is welcoming visitors again

[The Foundation acquired another such symbol — the America for Bulgaria Center](#), which had previously served as the US Ambassador's residence in Bulgaria and embodied the relationship between the two countries for the past 80 years.

Our newest portfolio, tourism, had a strong year. [Dozens of initiatives were launched](#), with many local businesses and hundreds of individuals benefiting from them.

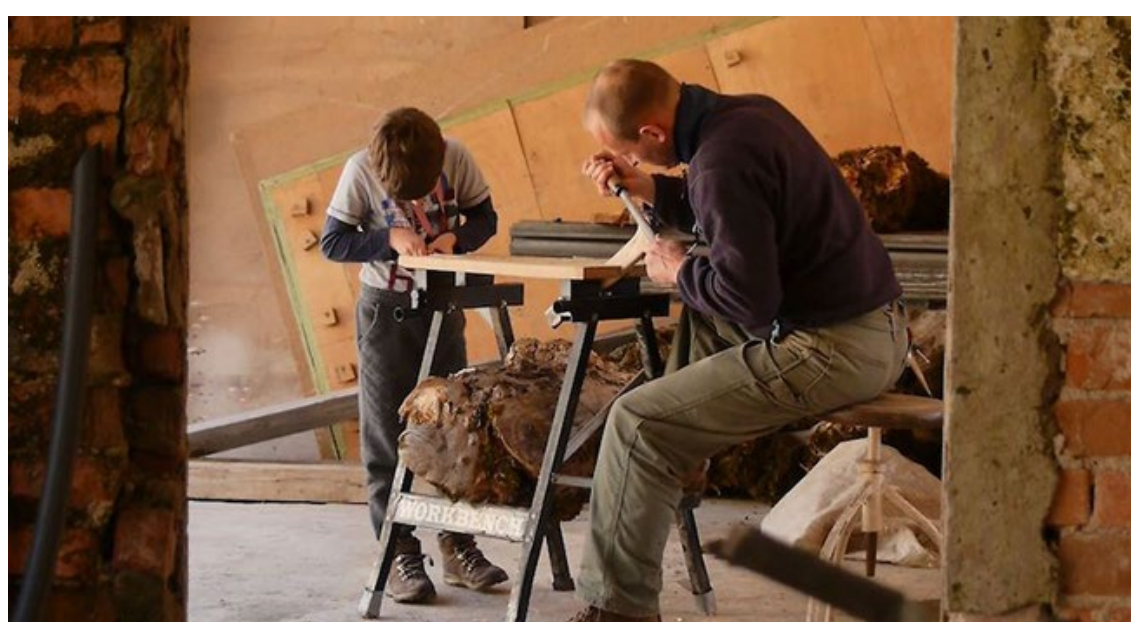


The Danube is an explorer's heaven: the more you discover, the more there is to explore.

After the unprecedented mobilization of local communities in response to the pandemic last year, we launched a new program in partnership with the AGORA Platform to [build on these communities' ability to marshal financial and human resources](#) in support of local causes.

Through our partners, we also helped advance the conversation about civic participation — about [what it means to be citizens of a democratic country](#) today.

The [graduates of the American University in Bulgaria](#) have been a small but vocal part of this conversation. Their alma mater celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October.



Radenko Velinov, a participant in Business Academy for Starting Entrepreneurs, dreams of restoring traditional crafts like woodworking in his native village

This fall also marked the beginning of a new chapter for the Regional History Museum of Vratsa. A public-private partnership between the institution, Vratsa Municipality, and the America for Bulgaria Foundation will secure [the redesign of the museum's Thracian collection](#).

The greatest treasure is health, as they say in Bulgaria. I look forward to a healthier, more prosperous 2022, when we can hopefully put Covid-19 behind us. But we won't get there unless we continue to observe measures, vaccinate, and reject misinformation.

I hope you will enjoy the holidays in the company of family and loved ones.

On behalf of the ABF team, I wish you joy, peace, and tranquility and a less interesting 2022.



Nancy Schiller
President and CEO
America for Bulgaria Foundation

Holiday-themed illustration by Ralitsa Tchobanova

