

Regional fact sheet – Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and particularly Central Asia (CA) have made significant progress since the Education for All goals were adopted in 2000. In most countries, primary school enrolment was high and countries have sustained or even improved gender parity levels. However, many of these gains, as well as other human development goals, are under threat from the global economic downturn.

EFA progress and challenges

- Children who suffer nutritional deprivation in the womb or malnutrition during the early years of life are at risk of developmental delays that impede later learning. More than twenty percent of children under age 5 suffer from severe or moderate stunting in Albania in CEE and in Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Tajikistan in CA.
- On average, only 28% of children in CA were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2007, compared with about two-thirds in CEE and in countries in transition. This represented more than 11 million children total enrolled in pre-school programmes in 2007.
- Between 1999 and 2007, the average net enrolment ratio (NER) in CEE increased from 91% to 92% and in CA from 88% to 92%. Country NERs range from about 85% in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan to above 95% in Azerbaijan, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Tajikistan
- CEE and CA together have registered remarkable progress since 1999 in reducing the out-of-school population by about 677 thousand, down to 1.8 million in 2007. Yet some deficits remain: 5% to 7% percent of the regions' primary school age children were out of school in 2007. Countries with the largest out-of-school populations in 1999 such as Poland and Azerbaijan had made significant reductions by 2007. Enrolment rates have stagnated in Turkey at around 90% since 2002 – far below the level predicted on the basis of Turkey's average income.
- The expansion of primary education has gone hand in hand with progress towards gender parity. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven countries with data in the two regions have achieved gender parity in primary education. The regional gender parity index (GPI) of the GER was 0.98 in both regions in 2007, but Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia, Tajikistan and Turkey remain below that average.
- In CEE, there were nearly 1.5 million out-of-school adolescents in 2007, equivalent to 7% of the lower secondary school age group; in CA, these figures were 300 thousand and 4%, respectively.
- The regions' secondary enrolment in 2007 were among the world's highest, at 88% in CEE and 95% in CA. Country GERs ranged from less than 85% in the Russian Federation, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Tajikistan to more than 97% in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Uzbekistan.
- An estimated 2.5% and 1.4% of the adult population in CEE and CA respectively, or 8.7 million adults total, lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed in everyday life.
- Most countries have high literacy rates - adult literacy rates of around 97% or above were registered in twenty-two of the twenty-three countries with data.

- Most countries in CEE and CE have decreased the teacher workforce as primary school enrolments declined since 1999, in most cases improving the pupil/teacher ratio concurrently.
- The lack of trained teachers is of concern in some of the countries with data available. In 2007, the share of trained primary school teachers in CA ranged from 62% in Kyrgyzstan to around 100% in Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan.
- For the countries with data in both regions, twenty-two have achieved or are close to the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals. Two countries rank in an intermediate position.

Marginalization in education

Absolute deprivation in education remains at high levels throughout parts of the regions, despite the progress of the past decade. A new data set on education marginalization reveals that factors leading to marginalization do not operate in isolation: wealth and gender intersect with language, ethnicity, region and rural-urban differences to create mutually reinforcing disadvantages.

- In Mongolia, more than one-quarter of the poorest households have less than four years of education, and they account for twice their population share at the bottom 20% of the education distribution.
- Girls are particularly disadvantaged in education attainment compared to the national average, especially in Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan and Turkey.
- The invisibility of Roma in national education programmes reinforces their exclusion: in Hungary, most education policies do not mention Roma, the country's most educationally disadvantaged community.

National education finance

- The share of national income devoted to education in 2007 varied substantially, from 2.6% in Armenia and Georgia to 7.3% in the Republic of Moldova, indicating the uneven commitment of governments to education. Between 1999 and 2007, the share of education spending in GNP rose in seven of the eleven countries with data in CEE and in half the CA countries
- On a regional level, CA assigns slightly more importance to education in government budgets than does CEE, but there is much variation among the countries with data. Only Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine allocated around 20% of their total expenditures to education in 2007, while the percentage was below 8% in Georgia. Between 1999 and 2007, Tajikistan and Ukraine increased this education share by around 50% or more, while Azerbaijan nearly halved its share. Turkey devotes 40% of its education expenditure to primary education.

International aid for education

- CEE and CA receive a relatively small share of the global official development assistance in 2006–2007, accounting for just 4% and 2%, respectively. Averaged over 2006 and 2007, total annual aid to education to CEE amounted to nearly US\$500 million, up from US\$456 million a year in 1999 and 2000.
- Turkey received one-quarter of total aid to education to CEE, with Ukraine and Albania far behind at 13% and 10%, respectively.