

Regional fact sheet – Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have been making steady progress in education since 1999. In particular, participation in pre-primary and tertiary education has increased considerably although wide disparities remain within countries. Enrolment rates are high in primary but nevertheless there remained about 2 million children out-of-school.

EFA progress and challenges

- Pre-primary gross enrolment rates increased by 13 percentage points in CEE and about 8 percentage points in CA between 1999 and 2006. In Belarus and the Czech Republic pre-primary systems are now capable of enrolling most of children between the ages of 3 and 5.
- Attendance in pre-primary programmes sometimes varies widely amongst different ethnic and linguistic groups within countries. In Montenegro, pre-primary attendance rates for 3-4 year old Bosnian/Muslim children were 10% compared to 41% for Montenegrin children.
- Despite high levels of enrolment, progress towards universal primary education (UPE) in both regions has been relatively slow since 1999. The primary NER has increased from 91% to 92% and 87% to 89% between 1999 and 2006 in CEE and CA respectively. However, the NER has been declining in a significant number of countries including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova and Romania in CEE and Kyrgyzstan in CA.
- In many countries the distribution of children not attending school is skewed towards the poor. Poverty interacts with wider inequalities and markers for disadvantage related to gender, location, language and other factors. Breaking down these inequalities is a key to accelerated progress towards UPE in both regions.
- Almost all children who complete primary school in CEE and CA make the transition to secondary education and gross enrolment ratios remained high, at 88% and 91% in 2006, respectively.
- Tertiary education opportunities have expanded by more than 60% since 1999 in both CEE and CA. However, tertiary GERs in the regions were very different; 60% in CEE and only 25% in CA in 2006.

- While adult literacy rates are high, an estimated 8 million adults in CEE are considered illiterate. More than three-quarters of these adults are in Turkey alone.
- In CA, the adult literacy rate was estimated at 99% in 2000-2006 and Uzbekistan, with an estimated 565 thousand illiterates, had the lowest literacy rates in the region.
- By 2006, more than a quarter of all countries in CEE and half of countries in CA with data had failed to achieve the 2005 goal of gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment ratios.
- The most recent PISA assessment in 2006, in which over half of CEE countries participated, showed that learning outcomes varied considerably among 15 year olds. On the one hand, approximately 50% of students in Montenegro, Romania and Turkey scored at or below level 1, the lowest level in the PISA science ranking. On the other, Estonia ranked second amongst all of the 54 participating countries with over 90% of students scoring above level 1.
- Only two CA countries (Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan) participated in the 2006 PISA and both performed poorly compared to other countries in the study; over three-quarters of all children in these two countries performed at or below level 1.

National education finance

- The share of education in total public expenditure is a direct measure of government commitment to education than the share in GNP. The median share of government spending on education in CEE (12.7%) was amongst the lowest of any region but similar to the developed country average (11.8%).
- Government commitment to education in 2006 varied widely across the regions. In CA Georgia devotes only 9% of government spending to education compared to 19% in Tajikistan. In CEE, Bulgaria devotes only 6% compared to 20% in the Republic of Moldova.

International aid

- The CEE region received an annual average of US\$370 million in aid to education in 2005-2006 down from US\$409 in 1999-2000. Aid to basic education also declined from 32% of total education aid in 1999-2000 to 11% in 2005-2006.
- In CA, average annual aid to education increased from US\$102 million in 1999-2000 to US\$163 million in 2005-06 (constant 2006 dollars). The share devoted to basic education also increased from 24% to 39% over the period.