

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# The UNECE Report

ON ACHIEVING THE  
MILLENNIUM  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA, 2012



UNITED NATIONS

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[www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/publications/oes/UNECE\\_MDG\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/publications/oes/UNECE_MDG_Report_2012.pdf)

## FOREWORD

While the international community has already started discussing the development agenda that will build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after 2015, it is all the more important to accelerate efforts at all levels for achieving the MDGs by the target date.

This report documents the degree to which the eight goals based upon eighteen targets are on track to be fulfilled by 2015 in the Pan-European region.

The focus of the report is on the former transition economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, but it also examines progress in all of the UNECE economies for several goals which still have not been achieved in the advanced economies of Western Europe and North America. Generally the report finds that significant progress was being made in almost every area prior to the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, but the severe downturn during the crisis and sluggish recovery since 2009 has resulted in slower improvement. The crisis increased unemployment and poverty in much of the region and has significantly weakened government finances so that less is available for improving the educational and health infrastructure and in providing income maintenance for low income families. The deteriorating sovereign debt situation in the advanced economies has resulted in a scaling back of official development assistance which is desperately needed in much of the developing world to close the financing gap for achieving the targets. Unfortunately the economic outlook for the coming year for the UNECE region is quite subdued, and some of the goals may not be achieved without a more focused effort by our member States.

The report highlights that in the UNECE region poverty, hunger and lack of access to education and health care are not endemic to the general population as in much of the developing world, but are increasingly confined to marginalized groups including ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and migrants, persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and in a few cases, women and girls more generally. Thus government policy should concentrate on creating more equitable societies with better designed policies for reaching these disadvantaged groups. There are some targets, especially in the environmental area, however, where the lack of progress is more widespread and there is a need for changes in policy and economy-wide activities; some of these goals remain unfulfilled even in the region's advanced economies.

The report concludes with two special chapters that examine in more detail some specific aspects related to the MDGs. The first deals with data issues; being able to accurately quantify targets is central to their analysis and to formulating policy recommendations. The second deals with population ageing in the region's emerging economies and its implications for the fiscal sustainability of social insurance systems; this presents a significant long-term challenge for the economic development of these economies.

UNECE remains committed to support the efforts of the countries in the region towards fully achieving the MDGs by the 2015 timeline.



Sven Alkalaj

Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

### **ECE Subregions**

#### **South-Eastern Europe (SEE)**

Albania	Montenegro
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Serbia
Croatia	Turkey
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	

#### **Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia (EECCA)**

Armenia	Republic of Moldova
Azerbaijan	Russian Federation
Belarus	Tajikistan
Georgia	Turkmenistan
Kazakhstan	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan

#### **Economies in Transition (EiT) = EECCA + SEE**

#### **New EU post-transition member States (NMS)**

Bulgaria	Lithuania
Czech Republic	Poland
Estonia	Romania
Hungary	Slovakia
Latvia	Slovenia

#### **Emerging Europe and Central Asia (ECA) = EECCA + SEE + NMS**

#### **European Advanced Economies (EAE)**

Andorra	Liechtenstein
Austria	Luxembourg
Belgium	Malta
Cyprus	Monaco
Denmark	Netherlands
Finland	Norway
France	Portugal
Germany	San Marino
Greece	Spain
Iceland	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland
Israel	United Kingdom
Italy	

#### **Pan-European Economies = ECA + EAE**

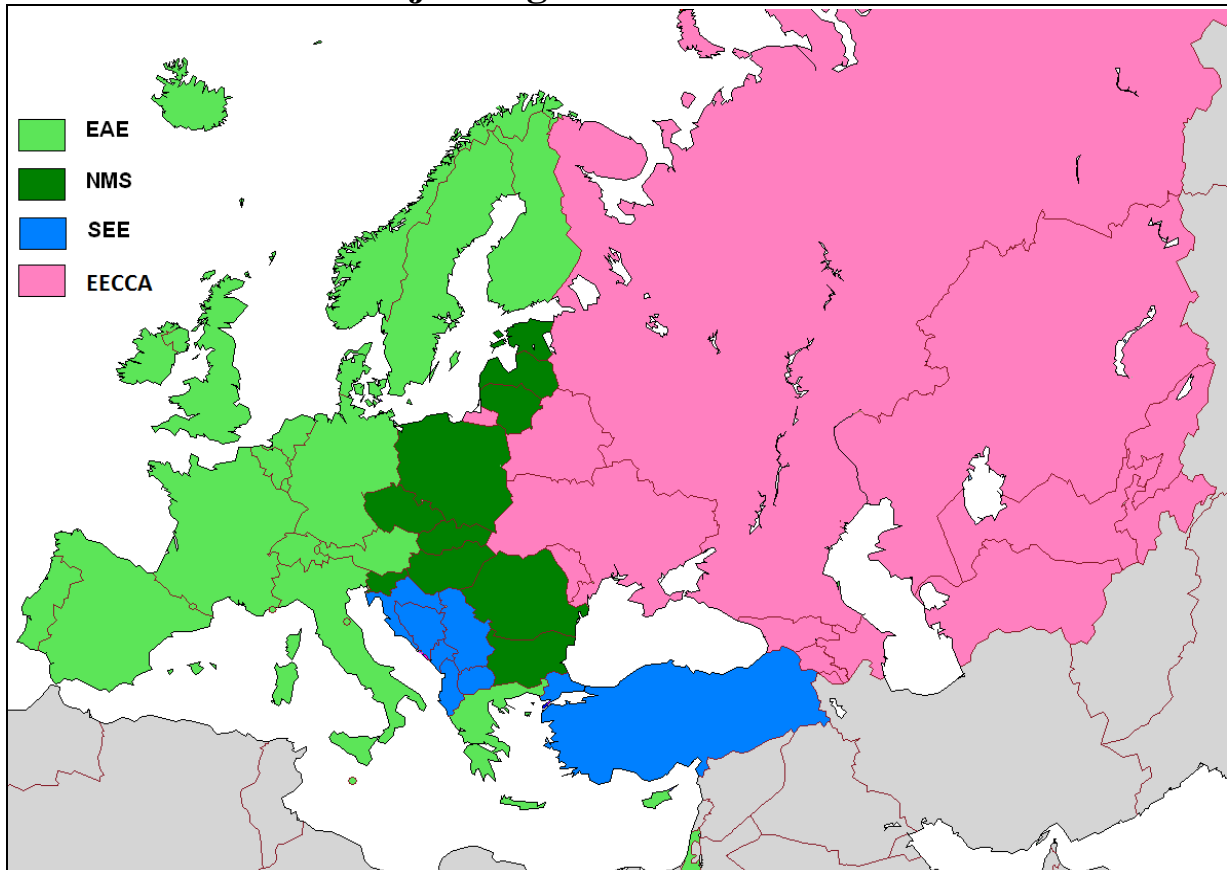
#### **North America (NA)**

Canada	United States
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#### **ECE Advanced Economies = EAE + NA**

#### **ECE Economies = ECA + EAE + NA**

## Major Regions of the ECE



**Note:** North America not included

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *MDG performance*

This report focuses on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 29 emerging economies in the ECE region. This group is quite heterogeneous in terms of the level of development, gathering 10 post-transition EU member States (NMS) as well as 12 post-Soviet republics in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and 7 countries in South-Eastern Europe (SEE).<sup>1</sup> Some 478 million people live in the three sub-regions, including 102 million in the NMS (including 38 million in Poland), 281 million in the EECCA (of which 142 million live in Russia), and about 95 million in the SEE (including 74 million in Turkey). The region as a whole is characterized by high levels of economic and human development. However, the regional averages on MDG progress mask considerable disparities between countries and within countries. Therefore, making economic growth more inclusive and sustainable, and adopting social protection systems and policies that reduce social and economic gaps is an imperative for all countries of the region.

The report's findings show that policies for an acceleration of MDG progress are particularly relevant for the EECCA and SEE countries. While the report concentrates on the MDG progress in the ECE emerging markets, it also provides, where relevant, brief assessments of progress in high-income economies of Western Europe and North America. There are only a few MDG targets that apply to high-income economies, particularly in the areas of gender equality (MDG 3), environmental sustainability (MDG 7) and, to a lesser degree, poverty (MDG 1). In addition, these countries have also made a global commitment to help the developing world achieve its targets through financing for development, including ODA, and improving the world trading system (MDG 8).

The progress toward individual MDGs can be summarized as follows.

**MDG 1.** In all of the ECE economies there are vulnerable population groups living in extreme poverty. Abject poverty is more widespread in rural areas than in cities. It is usually found among the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, single parent households and persons with chronic health problems. Nevertheless, the problem of poverty (target 1.A), when defined in an absolute sense, is mostly restricted to the low-income and lower middle-income EECCA countries. The 2007 – 2009 global financial crisis known as the Great Recession had a significant negative impact on the livelihood in the region, including the most advanced economies, and is endangering the progress achieved in a number of EECCA and SEE countries and in some of the NMS. In particular, the adjustment strategies of low-income households saw cuts in discretionary spending on medical services and medicines. This trend is particularly worrisome in the MDG context. The recent financial turmoil in the eurozone threatens to increase poverty rates dramatically in a number of countries, including some EU member states and SEE economies linked to them strongly through trade and financial institutions. Target 1.B on decent work continues to be difficult to achieve in all sub-regions due to structural labour-market problems that have been exacerbated by the Great Recession. These problems are reflected in the high share of vulnerable and informal employment, as well as the extremely high unemployment

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<sup>1</sup> The countries in each of the ECE sub-regions are listed on the preceding pages. The EECCA corresponds to what is sometimes referred to as the CIS region in other publications; EECCA-11 is the EECCA minus Russia. The SEE-6 is the SEE minus Turkey. Cyprus and Malta are grouped with the European advanced economies (EAE) and not with the NMS.

rates for youth and disadvantaged minorities. The problem of high informal employment is particularly severe in rural areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Malnourishment (target 1.C) is low to negligible in most countries of the region.

**MDG 2.** Not surprisingly, the best outcomes are in the areas of school enrollment and gender equality in schools because of the region's tradition of mandatory school attendance and equal access. However, the quality of education and educational equity remain unsatisfactory in a number of countries. Another problem is posed by high dropout rates of students from disadvantaged minority backgrounds.

**MDG 3.** Throughout the region, despite women's high education level, severe problems remain with respect to their labour market participation, especially in some EECCA and SEE countries. The majority of women still occupy lower-paid and unstable jobs at the lower end of the career ladder. Moreover, wage differentials remain a resilient challenge to equality in the region, ranging from an average of 20 per cent in the EU to between 40 and 50 per cent in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The unequal position of women is reflected in their low political representation. With the exception of the Scandinavian countries, women continue to be strongly underrepresented in both political and economic decision-making positions.

**MDG 4.** Child mortality in the ECE region is the lowest in the world, and there is an overall trend towards achieving target 4.A in the ECE emerging economies. In the EECCA countries the mortality rate has fallen in some cases by as much as 50 per cent over the last decade. Nevertheless, child mortality in these countries is still relatively high, and some of them might not reach the target. Furthermore, strong disparities in health outcomes within countries have continued to persist in Central Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and even in some of the NMS.

**MDG 5.** The most recent available data indicate that only a few countries in the EECCA and SEE sub-regions are on track to reach the target on maternal mortality. The widespread use of abortion as an alternative to contraception and the high rate of adolescent pregnancies continue to affect a number of countries with transition economies.

**MDG 6.** This MDG represents the largest challenge for many economies in transition, with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis emerging as particular concerns. Not only is the HIV/AIDS infection rate high with its epicenter in the EECCA sub-region, but also in virtually none of the EECCA countries is there adequate antiretroviral treatment coverage for the infected although it has been increasing rapidly. The spread of tuberculosis, a disease linked to poverty, is also of concern as its

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