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# The MDGs in Europe and Central Asia: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward



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# The MDGs in Europe and Central Asia:

## Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward

## **Jointly prepared by:**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Development Programme

International Labour Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Food Programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

United Nations Development Fund for Women

World Health Organization

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Population Fund

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

International Trade Centre

**Coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

# Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared under the responsibility of Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the UNECE and Chair of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) of UN agencies, in close consultation with Kori Udovicki, Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS and Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) for Europe and Central Asia. The preparation was guided and coordinated by Patrice Robineau, Senior Advisor to the Executive Secretary, assisted by Jaromir Cekota, Economic Affairs Officer.

The various parts of the report were prepared by the staff of the regional offices for Europe and Central Asia of the relevant United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as follows:

**Overview:** This introductory chapter was prepared jointly by UNDP and UNECE. For UNDP, contributing staff were: Kori Udovicki, Regional Director, Balász Horváth, Gina Lucarelli, Vladimir Mikhalev, Ulrika Richardson-Golinski, and Jens Wandel. For UNECE, contributing staff were: Patrice Robineau and Jaromir Cekota. Furthermore, all United Nations system agencies involved in the report provided substantive inputs to this part.

**Chapter on MDG 1:** The coordination of this chapter was under the responsibility of UNDP. Balász Horváth was the coordinator. The work for each target under MDG 1 was organized as follows:

- **Target 1A** on poverty was prepared by UNDP. Contributing staff were: Balász Horváth and Vladimir Mikhalev.
- **Target 1B** on employment was prepared by Alena Nešporová, Deputy Regional Director, ILO.
- **Target 1C** on food security was jointly prepared by FAO and WFP. For FAO, contributing staff were: Jahan Kurbanova, Raimund Jehle and David Sedik. For WFP, contributing staff were: Daly Belgasim, Regional Director, Magdalena Moshi and Asif Niazi.

**Chapter on MDG 2:** This chapter was under the responsibility of **UNESCO**. It was prepared by Xuesong Shen, with contributions from Gwang-Chol Chang, Grégory Dubois, Talal El Hourani, Brennen Jenkins, Wally Merotto, Albert Motivans, Svein Osttveit, Engelbert Ruoss, Alexandre Sannikov, Olav Seim, Said Ould A. Voffal, and Mari Yasunaga. Kirsi Madi, from UNICEF, also contributed to this chapter.

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- The introduction to the three MDGs was prepared by Theadora Koller, with general oversight provided by Nedret Emiroglu and inputs from WHO colleagues and staff from the other contributing agencies mentioned below.



## Acknowledgements

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The Statistical Appendix was prepared by Lidia Bratanova, David Boko and Carsten Hansen from the UNECE Statistical Division.

The report was edited by Christina O'Shaughnessy and Charles Toby Pearce, and Felirose Gutierrez provided editorial and secretarial assistance.

# Foreword

## by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe



The path-breaking United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in the year 2000 by world leaders, provides a comprehensive framework of core values, principles and key drivers in the three overarching mandates of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, the subsequent Road Map towards the Implementation of the Millennium Declaration brings forward a set of eight universal development objectives with time-bound operational targets and quantitative indicators, covering all the major dimensions of well-being for any individuals in any society: decent income, employment, nutrition, access to essential services (health, education, water, housing) and environmentally sound living conditions.

Since then the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have become a worldwide reference framework for moving ahead on all these fronts. The experience gained so far shows that in order to make substantial progress towards the MDGs, it is crucial to incorporate them into national development strategies, to create an enabling international cooperation environment, to design cost effective policies tailored to the development context of each region and individual country, and to develop a monitoring system with proper indicators to adjust these policies in view of their effective impact.

The mobilization of all agencies of the United Nations system to support the MDG process is outstanding and the present report is a clear illustration of such mobilization on the part of the Regional Offices of these agencies for Europe and Central Asia. Based on their respective areas of competence, they have prepared the various chapters of the Report, showing for each goal where the countries of the region stand one decade after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, what are the accomplishments and policies to date and what should be the policy directions to take for accelerating progress. They have also contributed to the Overview which goes beyond a mere summary of the report by outlining the human development challenges specific to the region and highlighting the cross-sectoral policies to engage for both addressing these challenges and achieving the MDGs.

The pan-European region is highly diverse. It includes high-income economies of Western Europe which are also major Official Development Assistance (ODA) donors, middle income emerging donors from Central Europe which have joined the European Union and a group of 18 ODA eligible countries, half of which are classified as landlocked developing countries with a few being low-income countries and having most characteristics of the least developed countries. In the MDG perspective, the report focuses mainly on three country groupings: Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA); South-Eastern Europe (SEE); and the New Member States of the European Union (NMS). However, it also touches upon Western Europe in varying degrees whenever the goals are of concern to this part of the pan-European region, namely those related to poverty, gender equality, environmental sustainability and global partnership for development.



## Foreword by the Executive Secretary

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In general, the review of achievements in the countries covered by the report shows mixed results. On one hand, it highlights the remarkable progress achieved on the poverty front during the 2000-2008 period of vibrant economic growth, and a bounce-back from the deep transition recession in the emerging economies. Major progress was also made in other MDG related areas such as food security, women's employment, child and maternal mortality and, in the field of environmental sustainability, energy efficiency.

On the other hand, progress has been quite uneven, with large and persistent disparities between sub-regions and countries, as well as between geographical areas and population groups within countries. Acute poverty is by no means negligible in the pan-European region and the broad progress achieved until 2008 has been seriously threatened by the recent economic crisis. Other major MDG related challenges include the quality of primary education, under-representation of women in decision-making positions, unequal access to primary health care and reproductive health which impacts on reaching the health MDGs for socially excluded groups, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation in rural areas, growing informal settlements and, last but not least, rise in HIV and tuberculosis prevalence in parts of the region.

The fact that the minimum targets fixed globally will be difficult to reach for a significant number of countries and many population groups demonstrates the relevance of the MDGs for the pan-European region. And this relevance is reinforced by the fact that some countries have defined national MDG targets in view of their own development situation and perspective. These targets are either new or more ambitious than the existing global targets and, therefore, more challenging. By adopting such an evolving and contextualized approach these countries broaden the scope of the MDG framework and place it in a structural and longer term perspective, thereby reinforcing the validity of MDGs as a powerful reference for the design of development strategies and related policy making.

The overview of the Report shows that, in addition to policies linked to individual goals, achieving the MDGs requires adopting a broader approach and addressing a number of human development challenges which are specific to countries with transition economies. These challenges include rising inequalities, a large setback in social protection, an expanding informal sector, a decrease in male life expectancy and a massive surge of migration flows. Such profound changes have created a feeling of insecurity and frustration in large segments of the population. At the same time, the newly independent States emerging from the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have encountered additional problems of nation-building and for many of them this has been accompanied by regional tensions or large-scale conflicts, considerably diminishing their human capital and social cohesiveness.

A characteristic of the Eastern part of the pan-European region is the discrepancy between the seriousness of these problems and the governance capacity to solve them. This is because quite often public institutions are still in transition between the old intrusive, over-regulated State and a new State carrying out institutional reforms according to the principles of a participatory political and social system, and a market economy. A key challenge to these countries, therefore, is to strengthen the capability of the State to promote human development in the post-transition context.



## Foreword by the Executive Secretary

In addition to the governance issue, the report points to other priority policy areas which can have a multiplier effect in reaching the MDGs. The following six should be highlighted. First, the design of sustainable social-protection schemes is critical to ensure a universal access to social services in a human rights perspective. Second, extra emphasis should be placed on promoting gender equality since it has cross-cutting effects on all the other MDGs. Third, budget allocation and choice in public investment must strike the right balance between social infrastructure and support to the productive capacity, including in the agricultural sector. Fourth, reviewing fiscal policies is decisive for reducing inequalities and for providing more fiscal space to finance social protection. Fifth, regional cooperation must be enhanced to address major MDG transboundary issues such as international migration, cross-border water management, trade and transport facilitation and climate change adaptation and mitigation. And sixth, donor countries of the region should at least maintain the existing ODA level for the lower income countries of the region and intervene for relaxing the conditionality of the international financial institutions on loans to emerging economies hardly hit by the economic downturn.

I wish to thank all the Heads of the United Nations Regional Offices for Europe and Central Asia for having collectively taken the decision to prepare this report within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), whose objective is to foster regional coherence of the United Nations system in the analytical and normative field. They have also contributed substantively to two regional events held in preparation for the September 2010 Summit on MDGs in New York: the Regional Consultation convened by the UNECE in March 2010 in Geneva and the conference “Istanbul MDG + 10: Europe and CIS”, generously hosted by the Government of Turkey in June 2010, in partnership with UNDP and UNECE, and with the active participation of member States of the region.

This report is thus an outstanding expression both of the agencies’ continued commitment to support the MDG achievement in Europe and Central Asia, and of their willingness to adopt the “Delivery as One” approach on the policy side of their work as they are already doing on the operational side.

By highlighting good policies conducted so far and proposing directions for the future, the report takes deliberately a pragmatic and forward-looking approach and I should like to encourage policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders to consider replicating the good practices outlined in the report as well as implementing the suggested recommendations.

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