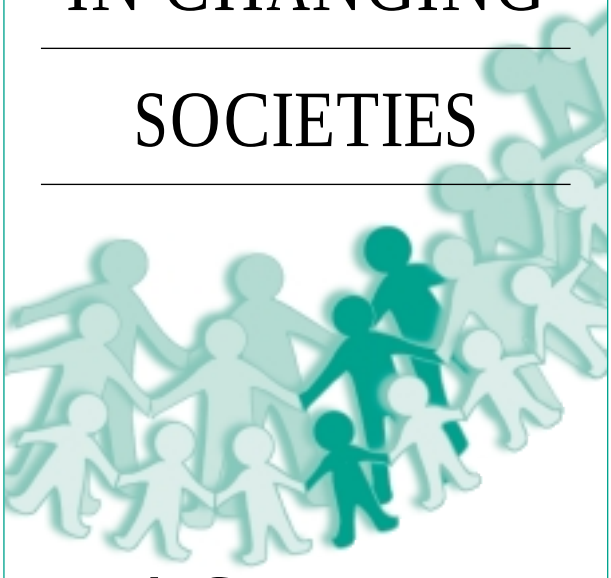
REGIONAL MONITORING REPORT
No. 7 – 2000

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHANGING SOCIETIES



A Summary

unicef
United Nations Children's Fund
Innocenti Research Centre
Florence, Italy

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All correspondence should be addressed to:
The MONEE Project
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
Piazza SS. Annunziata, 12
50122 Florence, Italy
Tel.: +39 055 203 30
Fax: +39 055 244 817
E-mail (for information): ciusco@unicef.org
E-mail (for orders): florence.orders@unicef.org
Website: www.unicef-icdc.org

UNICEF INNOCENTI RESEARCH CENTRE

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, was established in 1988 to strengthen the research capability of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to support its advocacy for children worldwide. The Centre (formally known as the International Child Development Centre) helps to identify and research current and future areas of UNICEF's work. Its prime objectives are to improve international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and the economic and social policies that affect them. Through its research and capacity building work the Centre helps to facilitate the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in both industrialized and developing countries.

The Centre's publications are contributions to a global debate on child rights issues and include a wide range of opinions. For that reason, the Centre may produce publications that do not necessarily reflect UNICEF policies or approaches on some topics. The views expressed are those of the authors and are published by the Centre in order to stimulate further dialogue on child rights.

The Centre collaborates with its host institution in Florence, the Istituto degli Innocenti, in selected areas of work. Core funding for the Centre is provided by the Government of Italy, while financial support for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

Contents

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

This publication is a summary of the seventh Regional Monitoring Report produced by the MONEE Project (Monitoring Public Policy and Social Conditions) at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. The Project has monitored changing conditions in the 27 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States since 1992. Its annual Monitoring Report is a unique source of information on the social impact of the transition that has taken place in the region over the last decade.

This year's Report, *Young People in Changing Societies*, focuses on the situation of the region's 65 million young people aged 15-24 – the 'transition generation'. This is the first generation since the collapse of communism to leave school, look for jobs and make decisions about raising families. As such, it is putting the reforms of the last decade to the test.

The seventh Regional Monitoring Report includes:

- An update on general economic and social trends
- The voices of young people, gathered during focus group discussions organized for this Report
- An investigation of the impact of the transition on young people, with chapters on health, education, employment, justice and citizenship
- A wealth of data, figures and tables, including a detailed Statistical Annex

Regional Monitoring Report No.7, *Young People in Changing Societies*, has been produced in cooperation with UNICEF Offices in the CEE/CIS and Baltics. It has received financial support from the Government of Italy, the World Bank and UNICEF's Regional Office for the CEE/CIS and Baltics, based in Geneva.

The 7th Regional Monitoring Report has been prepared by a team of authors led by Gaspar Fajth. This summary has been prepared by Angela Hawke of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

The Summary is available in English, Russian and Italian. The full Report, available in English and Russian, price US$25.00, can be ordered from:

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
Piazza SS. Annunziata 12
50122 Florence
Italy.
Tel: + 39 055 20330
Fax: + 39 055 244817
E-mail: florence.orders@unicef.org
To download the Report or summary, visit our website: www.unicef-icdc.org

VOICES OF YOUTH

The Report includes the views of young people gathered during focus group discussions in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. More details of the focus groups are available on the Innocenti Research Centre website: www.unicef-icdc.org

PREVIOUS REPORTS

1. *Public Policy and Social Conditions, 1993*
2. *Crisis in Mortality, Health and Nutrition, 1994*
3. *Poverty, Children and Policy: Responses for a Brighter Future, 1995*
4. *Children at Risk in Central and Eastern Europe: Perils and Promises, 1997*
5. *Education for All?, 1998*
6. *Women in Transition, 1999*

TRANSMONEE DATABASE

The MONEE Project's TransMONEE database – a stand-alone electronic database – includes a vast range of social and economic indicators collected during the compilation of each Regional Monitoring Report. The database allows the user to extract a profile of economic and social indicators for a single country or to compare a single indicator across sub-regions, countries and time-periods. For more details, see the website at: www.unicef-icdc.org

The seventh Regional Monitoring Report from the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre draws a picture of the 'transition generation' – the 65 million young people aged 15-24 in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Young People in Changing Societies covers 27 nations in a region transformed by socio-economic change since the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Its young people face a journey from childhood to adulthood that bears no resemblance to the journey made by parents who grew up in the oppressive yet stable conditions of state socialism. At that time, the transition to adulthood – to setting up home, getting a job and, perhaps, raising a family – was swift and controlled. Today's young people find that the institutions, resources and social norms that once smoothed the way from one generation to the next are either weak, in the process of fundamental change or non-existent.

Of the total youth population of 65 million in 1999, 26 million (41 per cent) were in education, 21 million (32 per cent) were employed, and 18 million (27 per cent) were neither in education nor in employment.

The members of this generation are often portrayed as the 'natural winnners' of the transition, receptive to new ideas and able to adjust to the new conditions. But they are also pioneers in these reborn societies. This role places them in a pivotal position: the transition presents particular hazards as well as particular opportunities for them.

The Report stresses the difficulties of obtaining clear data on a population group that is often overlooked in terms of statistics or surveys. Even so, it draws on a wide range of quantitative information, gathered in partnership with statistical offices, institutions and professionals in the region. Its chapters on health, education, employment, conflict with the law, and young citizenship highlight some consistent themes that require further research and action, finding that young people in the region:

- are more supportive of reform than older people but vote less
- are interested in the social and political life of their countries but are critical of the work of the new democratic institutions
- are exposed to greater risks in reproductive and sexual health, including the threat of HIV/AIDS, while having limited access to relevant information and services
- are often tolerant towards unlawful behaviour and come into conflict with the law more frequently than they did in 1989
- attach more importance to education, but enter school later, drop out more often and, in most countries, are less likely to continue into upper secondary education
- marry and have children later than young people did under communism
- show flexibility and resourcefulness in terms of their own economic welfare, but have far higher unemployment rates than older adults.

The Report finds growing similarities between youth in transition countries and those in other industrialized countries, especially in Western Europe: a reflection of new opportunities, but also of new dangers. The rigid environments that kept young people cocooned from risks have gone, for better or worse, and young people must now protect themselves. If they are to do this successfully, they must be empowered.

International conventions say that young people have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. The participation of young people is particularly important in the transition region, where future economic growth is largely dependent on human resources and where civil society and democracy are still developing.

Indeed, the Report finds a positive link between progress in the transition agenda and greater opportunities for young people, with little evidence of slower progress meaning fewer risks for youth. Progress for young people and progress in the transition appear to be mutually supportive.

A decade of transition has eroded the notion that young people are passive recipients of products, services and values. The Report sees the transition generation as an immense asset to the region and beyond in this time of rapid economic and social transformation and calls for youth-friendly policies that would benefit families, communities and societies as well as young people themselves. Two concepts underpin such strategies: the recognition of young people as a distinct population group with its own needs, and the participation of youth, including a meaningful dialogue with young people that would make a genuine contribution to policy responses.

It proposes that youth friendly policies prioritize the following issues region-wide:

- broader and more equitable education opportunities
- greater use of active labour market measures for young people
- reducing accidents and violence
- greater care on issues related to reproductive and sexual health
- prevention of substance abuse
- implementation of international standards in the treatment of youth in conflict with the law
- promotion of youth participation in civil society.

As well as involving young people in the planning and provision of services, youth-friendly policies should tackle the problems that undermine access to those services: costs, and lack of information, confidentiality and trust. They should exploit the links between health, education and employment, target particularly disadvantaged young people, and should be backed by both detailed research and political will.

Finally, the Report points out that much of the success or failure that surfaces in adolescence and youth is rooted in childhood, so investments in the well-being of children are vital. Happy and healthy young people do not spring from nowhere. They start out as happy and healthy children.

1 YOUTH IN TRANSITION

".. there is something to learn from older people. Their lives were much more difficult than ours, they have a lot of experience to share. At the same time, the problems they faced and solved are very different from the ones we come across today."
Ansis, 15

The Report examines what has happened to the 'transition generation' – the children of 1989 who are now the 65 million young people of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. These young people will not only be running their countries in the future, they have a major role to play in building these nations today – in advancing the progress towards market economics and democracy.

They have seen change on an immense scale: political systems established; economies reformed; national sovereignty asserted (sometimes with bloody consequences) and civil society reborn. Each of them embodies a transition within a transition - going through their personal journey from childhood to adulthood while their nations go through fundamental change.

Young people make up roughly 16 per cent of the entire population of the region, ranging from under 1 in 7 people in the Baltics to nearly 1 in 5 in Central Asia. Around one third of them, 22 million, live in Russia. Ukraine and Poland each account for 10 per cent of the region's young people, while Estonia and Slovenia each have fewer than 300,000.

Of the 67 million children aged 5-14 in 1989, around one million had left the region by 1999. Some have gone to better opportunities in other parts of the world, but some have been drawn into illegal work or the sex trade. There has also been migration within the region; sometimes for positive reasons, but often compelled by economic hardship, ethnic conflict or war. In most countries, more young people have left than arrived. Around half a million members of this generation are estimated by the MONEE Project to have died between 1989 and 1999, almost half of them in Russia.

Young people in the region have not been recognized as a distinct population, as different from children as they are from adults. They are not always 'seen' in the available data, and rarely 'heard' in terms of surveys and polls to capture their views. The Report therefore includes the views of young people gathered during focus group discussions and individual interviews in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The numbers taking part were small, and their views should not be seen as representative of the entire youth population of the region, but their responses provide an illuminating 'snapshot' of their feelings. Some of these responses are included in this summary.

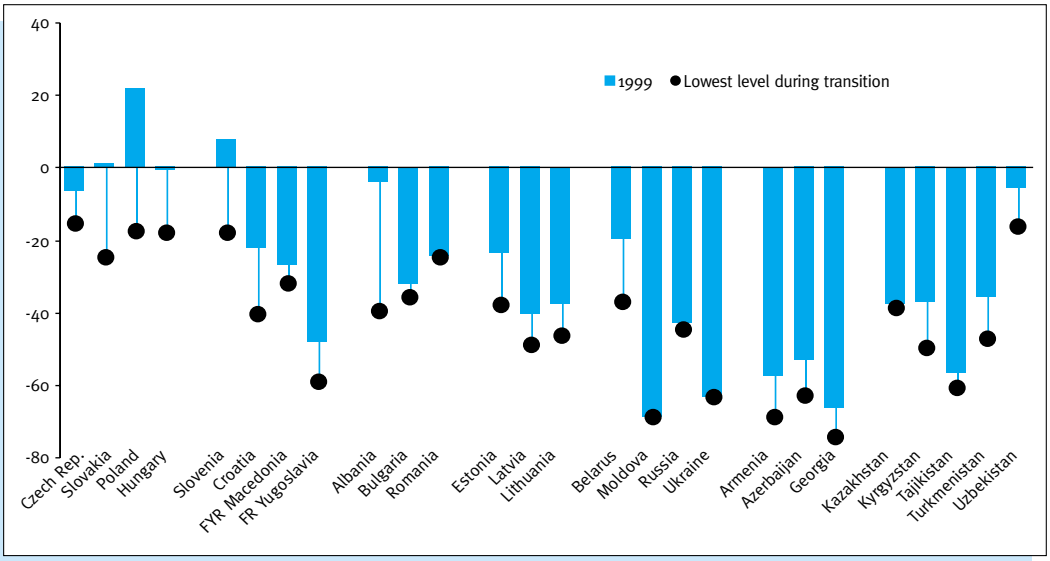

***Figure 1* – GDP in 1999 and at its lowest level during the transition (1989 = 100)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 1.5.

The Report outlines the huge changes in the region's economies – changes that have had an impact on young people. There were economic recessions in every country in the region in the 1990s, ranging from a 15 per cent drop in GDP in the Czech Republic to around 75 per cent in Georgia. The progress of economic reform and recovery has been mixed and in 1999 only three countries – Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia – had national incomes above 1989 levels (Figure 1). The good news is that the economic recession in the region seems to have bottomed out.

The lean years of the early 1990s affected the families in which the transition generation were raised and many had to make do with less. The long-term impact of recession has made it harder for young people leaving school to find work, and may have affected the quality of their schooling and training, further undermining their employment prospects. The Report also notes the progress of the private sector and the growth of the informal economy in virtually every country. Taken together, all of these changes have affected the numbers of young people staying on in full-time education, their entry into the world of work, and the kind of jobs they are able to get.

Unemployment was virtually non-existent in most countries in the region in 1989. It is now a major problem, particularly for young people. The average youth unemployment rate for 18 countries in the region stood at 30 per cent, twice as high as the overall unemployment rate (Figure 2).

The Report assesses how these changes have affected the decisions made by young people on setting up their own homes and starting their own families. It seems likely that the share of young people still living in their family home has risen since the fall of communism. Almost two-thirds of

those aged 20-24 still live at home, exactly the same proportion as found in the European Union. Looking at the falling numbers of young people leaving home, getting married and having children, the Report demonstrates that the journey from childhood to adulthood is taking longer.

What are the implications of this longer journey? The decisions being taken by the transition generation today in terms of family and household formation will have a major impact on their lives, the lives of their children and the demographic future of their countries. Between 1989 and 1998 the total fertility rate shrank by one third or more in most countries and by half in Armenia and Latvia. If current trends continue, says the Report, the number of people aged 15-24 will fall by one third in Central Europe within the next 20 years, while their numbers in Central Asia will eventually stabilize at, or close to, 1999 levels.

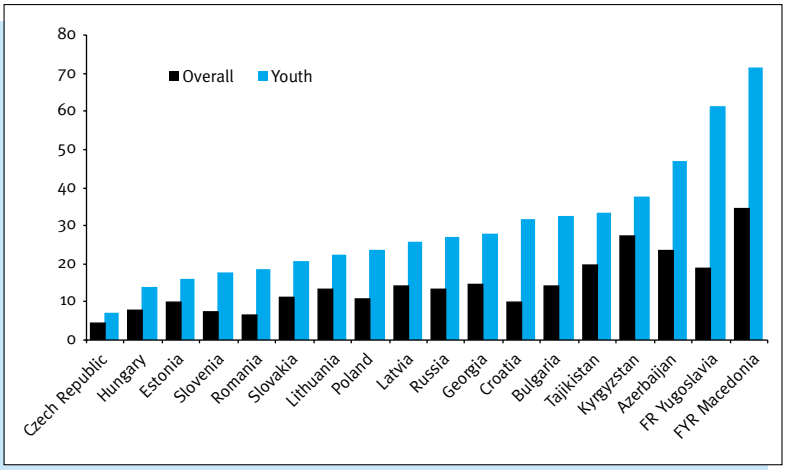

***Figure 2* – Youth and total unemployment rates in 18 transition economies, 1998 (per cent)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 1.8.

The Report welcomes the growing international recognition of the right of young people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. Young people themselves take a positive view of the changes that have taken place and the Report cites polls in 19 countries that found young people taking a more favourable view of the reforms than older adults. The Report finds that this willingness to embrace change makes young people a positive force for the maintenance and expansion of reform in the region. Under communism, youth participation was often about conforming. In the new transition societies, participation must be about making a difference.

2 GROWING UP HEALTHY

"Good health lets you physically do what you want – being able to go to a three-day drinking party, to run 10 kilometres, to dance in the rain."

Dorinel, 22

Young people are often seen as the healthiest of all age groups, but the Report reveals a generation whose health is under threat. While there have been positive developments over the last decade, including declines in youth deaths due to suicide and injuries in some countries such as Hungary, fewer teen births in Romania and Bulgaria or abortions among young women in Russia, the Report says that young people feel less healthy and are taking more risks with their health than they did in 1989.

Around half a million of those aged 5-14 in 1989 are not alive today. In 1998, 85,000 people aged 15-24 died in the region, about 30 per cent more than in 1989. Youth mortality rates rose in 11 countries, largely in the CIS, and fell in 16 countries, including the Baltic States and all the countries of Central Europe. The disparities have widened, with young people three times more likely to die in Russia and Kazakhstan in 1998 than those in Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Hungary (Figure 3).

The Report finds that many of these young deaths are caused by accidental injuries, violence, homicide, suicide, and by natural causes such as infectious diseases and maternity-related problems – most of them preventable. Examining deaths from injuries in 10 transition and 14 Western European countries, for example, the Report finds that Russia has the highest injury rate, seven times higher than the rate in the Netherlands. It also

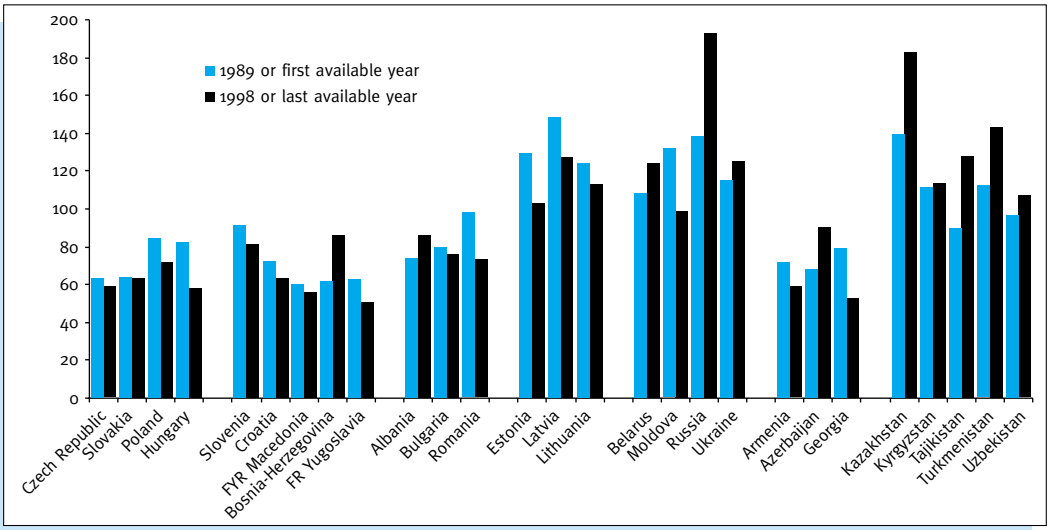

***Figure 3* – Mortality rates among 15-24 year-olds, 1989 and 1998 (per 100,000 relevant population)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 2.1.

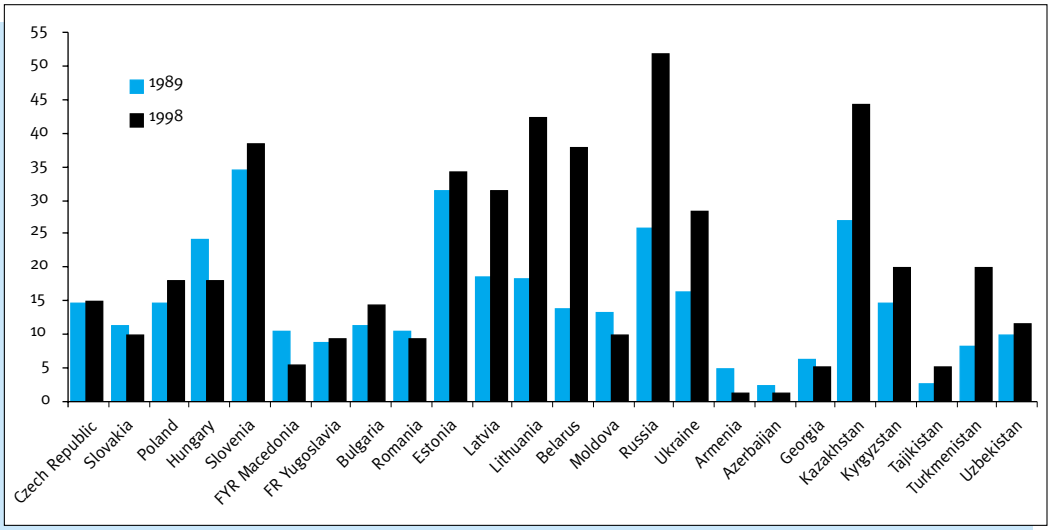

***Figure 4* – Suicide rates among males aged 15-24, 1989 and 1998 (per 100,000 relevant population)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 2.7.

finds that higher poverty and weaker social cohesion have exacerbated problems that contribute to poor health and risky behaviour such as poor nutrition, unsafe sexual activity and substance abuse.

Any increase in youth suicide rates – the most extreme sign of wider depression and stress – should set alarm bells ringing. The Report finds that while suicide rates for young men aged 15-24 fell in some transition countries, they rose in 16 countries between 1989 and 1998, more than doubling in Lithuania, Belarus, Russia and Turkmenistan. Rates were also particularly high, and rising, in Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan (Figure 4). Across the region suicide claims 10,000 males and 2,000 females aged 15-24 each year. A further 5,000 young men and 1,500 young women are murdered.

While young people in the region were born into a system that ensured access to universal health programmes, this was only half the picture. Health care under communism was overwhelmingly curative and rarely, if ever, 'youth-friendly'. As a result, good health was perceived as something that the state provided.

This attitude lingers, while the channels that brought young people into regular contact with health services, such as school and workplace check-ups, have been cut back. This means that young people have inadequate access to health care and information during the very period of their lives when they are most likely to take risks and at a time when the risks may be higher than they were prior to transition. Smoking among young people is increasing, for example. A 1993-94 survey of seven transition countries found that 10 per cent of 15 year-old girls and 22 per cent of boys were regular smokers. These figures had risen to 18 and 29 per cent respectively just four years later. Overall, more boys now smoke in these countries than in Western Europe (Figure 5).

Alcohol abuse has been rising. In Russia, for example, the number of

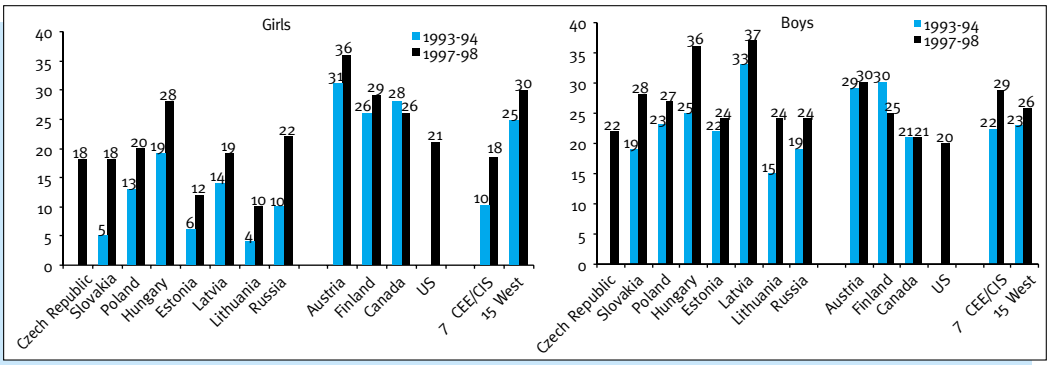

***Figure 5* – 15 year-old students who smoke at least once weekly, 1993-94 and 1997-98 (per cent)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 2.9.

adolescents taken to dispensaries dealing with alcohol problems rose between 1990 and 1998, while the total number of registered alcohol abusers remained generally stable.

By the mid-1990s roughly 10 per cent of the secondary school-age population had used cannabis or solvents in several transition countries where such things were almost unknown in 1989. A 1999 survey found that 25 per cent of 16 year-olds in Hungary had used drugs of some kind. Surveys of secondary school students in Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan found that the percentage experimenting with drugs rose from 2 per cent in 1994 to 12 per cent in 1996.

Surveys confirm an increase of intravenous drug use in the region with major implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS. In Ukraine, for example, 1,000 of the 13,000 drug users screened in the first three months of 1999 were found to be HIV positive.

Examining changes in reproductive and sexual health in the region, the Report outlines the disturbing spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis – a sign of the unsafe sexual activity that is paving the way for an HIV/AIDS crisis in a region that was one of the least affected parts of the world in 1989.

There were around 12,000 known cases of HIV affecting all age groups in the region in 1995. By the end of 1998, just three years later, there were over 50,000 known cases. While in most Central and Eastern European countries the number of new cases registered each year is low but rising, in some CIS countries, particularly Ukraine, rates are skyrocketing (Figure 6). Recorded cases may represent only a fraction of the likely infections, with UNAIDS estimating that there were around 360,000 infected people in the region at the end of 1999. Young people aged 15-24 account for one third of all known cases of HIV in Latvia and the Czech Republic, rising to two thirds in Belarus.

Addressing the various health risks faced by young people in the region, the Report calls for the strengthening of a whole range of intermediate health services in the region: information, health education, support networks, counselling, shelters, and other services. Health services should be more 'youth friendly' adopting the more open approaches that are particularly crucial for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

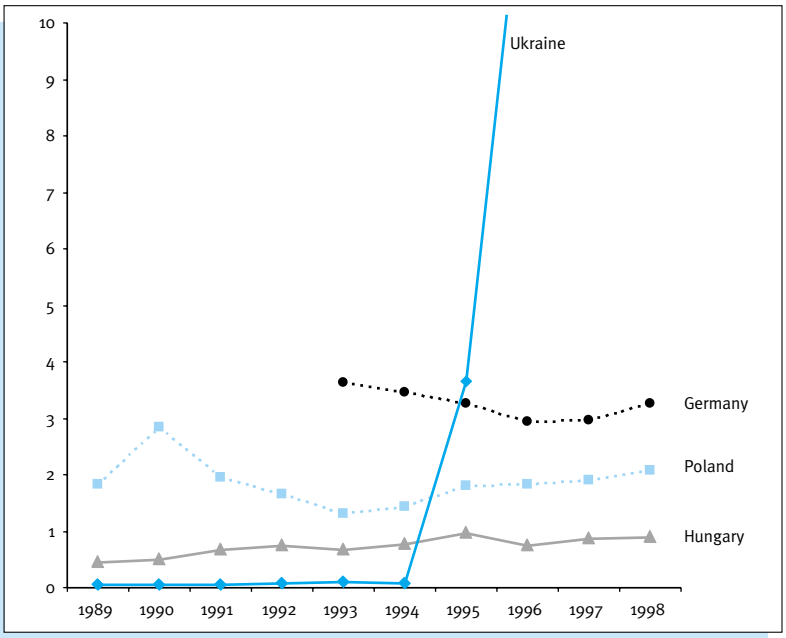

***Figure 6* – Patterns of registered HIV incidence, 1989-98 (rates per 100,000 population aged 15+)**

Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 2.15.

Young people are more likely to use services that respect confidentiality and involve them in their design, implementation and administration. Allowing young people to participate in youth health services would contribute to their immediate and future health and to more effective costs and benefits in the health care system.

Voices of Youth

Growing up healthy

- "We should always try to lead a healthy life; then both we and our children will be healthy." (Said, 18)
- "Good health means that you have no business with the doctor, no need for medication." (Cerasela, 16)
- "If you do not have any friends or contacts among doctors, it is better not to consult them at all and try to cure yourself." (Galina, 19)
- "One cigarette per day could even lower the risk of cancer." (Elena, 19)
- "They (STI therapists) claim they maintain absolute confidentiality but, at the same time, they ask for my identity card. I cannot trust them." (Ksenia, 22)
- "It's not that I am trying to avoid (accidents and violence); I am trying to find them." (Vova, 15)

3 THE SCHOOL YEARS

"Without education a person is a nobody."
Zhakhongir, 16

The Report finds a mixed picture of education across the region, with greater opportunities accompanied by greater inequality and exclusion. The good news is that young people are placing increasing value on education, that tertiary enrolment is rising across the region and that the share of women in higher education is mostly on the rise.

The bad news is falling enrolment in upper secondary education. The number of young people aged 15-18 opting out of school rose by three million between 1989 and 1998, from six to nine million – more than one third of that age group. The figures vary across the region. Overall, the countries of Central Europe and the Baltics have seen modest rises in upper secondary enrolment. All other parts of the region have seen major falls (Figure 7). Two countries have, however, seen continuous decline: Tajikistan, down from 61 per cent in 1989 to 24 per cent in 1998 and Turkmenistan, where enrolment has fallen from 68 per cent to 30 per cent.

The Report finds that the countries with lower enrolment rates are those lagging behind in economic recovery and reform, with a striking link between changes in secondary enrolments and GDP. Countries that have cut back in education in response to economic problems are undermining their long-term chances of redevelopment by failing to invest in their future workers and leaders. The individual young people who miss out on education will find it difficult, if not impossible, to make up this lost ground in years to come.

While the Report focuses on upper secondary education (typically age 15-18) and higher education, it stresses that basic education sets the scene

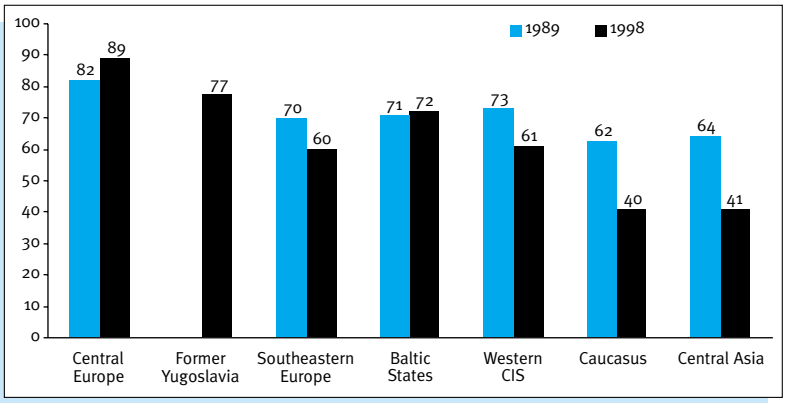

***Figure 7* – Enrolments in upper secondary education, by subregion, 1989 and 1998 (average percentage of 15-18 year-olds)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 3.4.

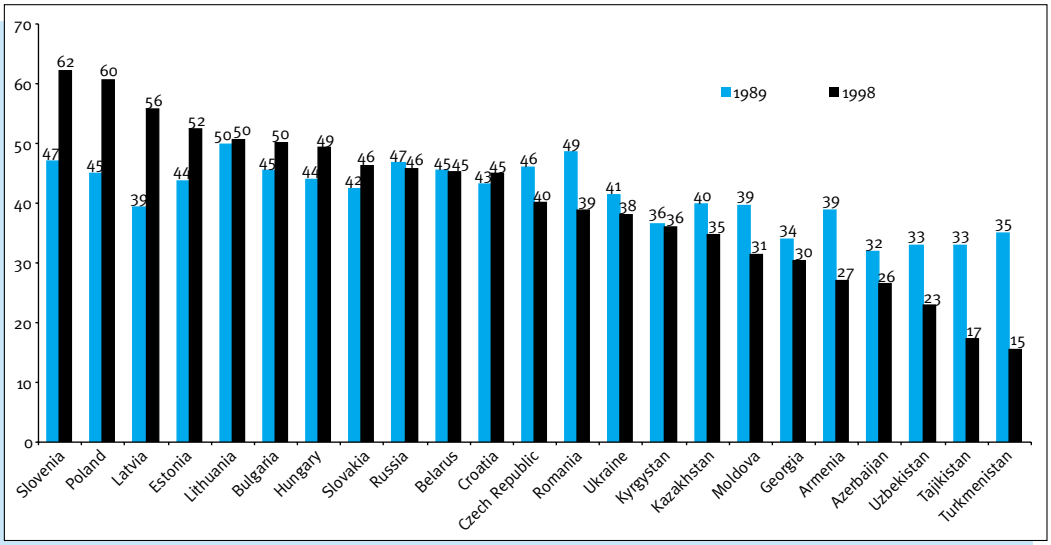

***Figure 8* – Youth enrolments in secondary and tertiary education, 1989 and 1998 (percentage of 15-24 population)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 3.3.

for educational success or failure. The Report finds that fewer children are graduating from basic education or completing it by the age of 15. Basic school completion, almost universal in 1989, fell by 10-20 percentage points in the CIS countries by 1997. Parts of Eastern Europe also show significant falls, with rates in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania in 1997 all below 80 per cent.

The number of young people graduating from upper secondary school has also fallen, but, for those who do, there are greater opportunities for tertiary education. Overall, the enrolment of those aged 15-24 has dropped from 43 to 41 per cent, with substantial falls in many countries, despite an increase in tertiary enrolments among 19-24 year-olds (Figure 8).

The Report also finds that young people from poor families, rural areas, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities are disproportionately represented among those who leave school early or who never enrol at all, and that rising poverty in parts of the region is a factor in falling enrolment, with young people working to supplement the family income.

Indeed, family income is now a more important element in upper secondary schooling. Education costs have risen and include formal fees, informal tuition charges, the cost of textbooks and allowances for young people studying away from home. Some countries are charging formal fees for public sector upper secondary education. Georgia, for example, introduced fees for grades 10 and 11 in 1996. Fees are now common in public higher education, while student allowances have fallen. By 1995, the monthly student allowance in Azerbaijan was just enough to buy one kilo of poor quality meat.

Some teachers charge their own pupils fees for extra tuition. In Moldova, many parents taking part in a 1998 survey said that they paid hundreds of US dollars for tutoring for their children in language, maths and science, with bribes often required to guarantee a place in university.

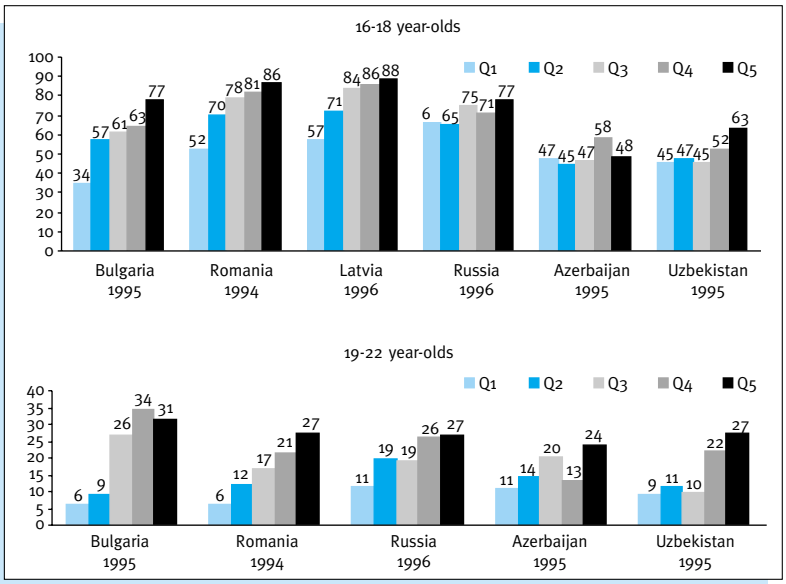

***Figure 9* – Enrolment rates by household per capita income (per cent)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 3.12.

The available evidence suggests that young people from poorer households are less likely to continue with their education. The Report finds that in Bulgaria, for example, the gap between the enrolment levels of those aged 16 to 18 from the poorest fifth of households and the richest fifth is more than 40 percentage points, with the gap in Romania and Latvia exceeding 30 percentage points (Figure 9).

The Report also finds that young people are turning away from vocational education across the region in the belief that general secondary schools provide a more rounded education and a route to university. The Report finds the situation more complex, stressing that it is the quality of education that matters.

Looking at what goes on inside the classroom as well as the numbers attending, the Report asks whether schools are helping to shape youth health and well-being. It highlights positive measures, such as the WHO initiative on health promoting schools that go beyond health education to foster a broader concept of youth health. Research has shown that improving general capacities such as critical thinking, analysis, conflict resolution, teamwork and effective communication has a beneficial effect on young people's health behaviour and their ability to resist negative pressure.

The Report also asks whether young people are being equipped for new societies that need flexible and creative individuals with relevant skills. A 1998 survey in the Czech Republic, for example, found that employers wanted employees with language skills, initiative, high standards, technical skills and the ability to make their own decisions. But the Report finds that education in the region is too factual and overly specialized, building up a knowledge-base of facts, rather than personal abilities and life skills.

Declining enrolment rates may reflect disenchantment with the schools themselves. Karene, a 17 year-old student, commented on her vocational school: "I have had to study in a very cold classroom in winter before, where we had to study wearing jackets. The room was very cold, dark and unfriendly: we were in no mood to study there."

The Report also examines teacher morale and current teaching practices, an issue summed up by 15 year-old Gairat who says: "Sometimes I look at my teacher and I feel sorry for her. I see that she cannot concentrate, is thinking about other things. And I wish that she did not have to worry about all these everyday cares. That she had enough money to concentrate on doing her job and teaching us well."

Creating education systems to prepare young people for the future at a time when that future is unclear is a major challenge across the region. But this makes education policies and programmes that nurture human development, social cohesion and economic growth even more important. In this new environment, young people need educational approaches that will encourage their initiative, their critical and creative thinking and their ability to make decisions for themselves.

Voices of Youth

The school years

- "A good job is a job with the prospect of access to further education." (Ivana, 24)
- "…I felt as if I was doing time when I had to go to school every day. I didn't feel comfortable there … I've discussed it with my mother and she said she does not want me to go on with school after nine grades." (Karina, 15)
- "It's possible to get a diploma for money … A diploma is one thing and education is another." (Egor, 18)
- "Nowadays, teachers are too arrogant; they do not want to listen to a student's opinion. If the student is quiet and silent, he is good. If a student stands up for himself and has a personal opinion, they are very much against it." (Martinsh, 16)
- "If you are supported by the family, by the state and by the school and if you believe in your abilities, you will achieve everything." (Vasia, 16)

4 WORKING LIFE

"In the past the government used to support people. They provided secure jobs. And now all the factories are shut down and we cannot find a job."

Andrey, 17

A good start in the labour market can lay a strong foundation for adult life; a poor start can jeopardize future prospects. Young people in the region are entering a labour market that bears no resemblance to the one that existed under communism. At that time, unemployment was virtually non-existent and entry into the labour market was guaranteed and even enforced.

Table 4.2

Unemployment among youth 15-24 and overall unemployment, 1998
(per cent)

	Youth	Overall	Difference
Czech Republic	6.9	4.2	2.7
Slovakia	20.4	11.1	9.3
Poland	23.3	10.6	12.7
Hungary	13.5	7.8	5.7
Slovenia	17.4	7.1	10.3
Croatia	31.4	9.9	21.5
FYR Macedonia	70.9	34.4	36.5
FR Yugoslavia	61.1	18.5	42.6
Bulgaria	32.2	14.0	18.2
Romania	18.3	6.3	12.0
Estonia	15.7	9.9	5.8
Latvia	25.5	13.8	11.7
Lithuania	22.2	13.3	8.9
Russia	26.8	13.3	13.5
Georgia	27.5	14.3	13.1
Azerbaijan	46.4	23.3	23.1
Kyrgyzstan	37.3	27.2	10.1
Tajikistan	33.2	19.6	13.6
CEE/CIS-18	29.5	14.4	15.1
Germany	10.7	9.9	0.8
France	29.0	12.6	16.4
Italy	33.6	12.4	21.2
Spain	39.2	20.9	18.3
UK	13.6	7.1	6.5
EU-15	21.2	10.8	10.4

Sources: MONEE project database; Eurostat (1998); Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan living standards surveys.

Note: Year is 1995 for Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, 1997 for the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the EU countries and 1999 for Tajikistan. "CEE/CIS-18" is the average only among the transition countries included.

The transition generation faces a new phenomenon: youth unemployment. In 1998 the average rate of youth unemployment stood at 30 per cent in the 18 transition countries for which data are available – twice as high as the overall unemployment rate (Table 1). Many of these unemployed youth, over 40 per cent, had been without a job for more than a year. The extremes are clear, with around 7 per cent of young people unemployed in the Czech Republic, rising to over 70 per cent in FYR Macedonia.

This is, however, only part of the picture. While many young people are officially regarded as unemployed, there are many others who are also jobless. Of the 18 million young people who were not in school and not in employment in 1998, an estimated 8 million were regarded as unemployed i.e. available for work and looking for jobs. This leaves 10 million who are not in the labour force at all – a vast number of young people outside the labour 'system' – many of them in the southern part of the region. There is also evidence that some groups of young people – the less educated, young women, those living in remote or rural areas and those from minorities – are especially vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market.

The Report finds that economic growth does not automatically mean job creation.

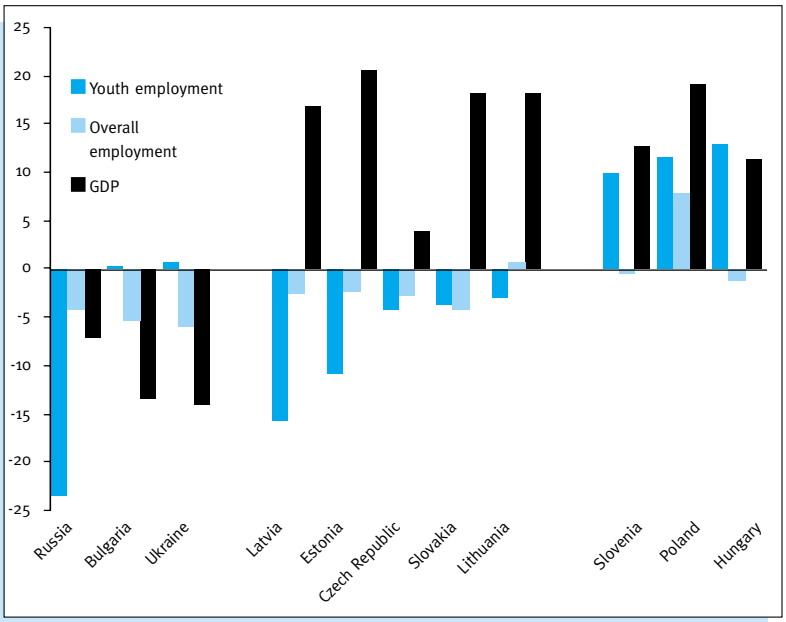

Figure 10 **– Youth employment and economic growth, 1995-98 (percentage change)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 4.2.

Large falls in GDP affected all countries in the region early in the transition but the impact on youth employment has varied. As Figure 10 shows, in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, economic recovery has led to higher employment, particularly for young people, since 1995. Recovery in the Baltic States, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, however, has seen a fall in youth employment. In Bulgaria and Ukraine, youth employment has remained stable (albeit at lower levels than in 1989) despite continuing falls in GDP, while in Russia youth employment has fallen even more than overall employment and GDP (Figure 10).

Striking a positive note, the Report finds that one third of the region's young people are employed and that the changing nature of employment may work in their favour. Young people have been particularly active in the new private sector, where their flexibility and mobility have been welcomed. While young people earn less than adults, the income gap in the region is remarkably small and sometimes smaller than in the established market economies. For example, young people earn 86 per cent of adult wages in Bulgaria and Poland, compared to 72 per cent in Germany and 67 per cent in Norway.

Young people are creating their own employment solutions. An increasing number are staying in education to boost their job prospects, and many rely on support from family and friends while studying or looking for work. Others rely on personal connections to find a job, create their own jobs or move into the informal economy. In rural areas, reliance on subsistence farming is the last resort for the most vulnerable.

While the resourcefulness of young people is impressive, the Report finds

that few of these coping strategies are sustainable in the long-term. Their efforts must clearly be matched by initiative and creativity in public policy.

The Report suggests that young people are particularly likely to benefit from training and self employment programmes, as well as programmes to help those seeking their first job. Many countries now put more emphasis on active measures such as counselling, personal development and skills training. In Hungary, for example, the share of unemployed youths participating in such schemes rose from 26 per cent in 1997 to 44 per cent in 1998. However, funding for such policies remains low and most transition countries spend only a tiny fraction of their GDP on such measures.

More effort is needed to create active labour policies targeted at young people and to monitor the impact of those already in existence. National employment agencies are under-used by both employers and job seekers, with only an estimated 30 per cent of vacancies reported to labour offices. Improvements in the services offered by these employment agencies would be of particular benefit to young people.

The Report also calls for more analysis of the employment situation for the transition generation. Understanding how young people search for work, where they work and under what conditions, would help in the development of effective labour policies.

Voices of Youth

Working life

- "I was working for a private firm, and I was really scared that they would sack me when the baby came. On the contrary, they have helped me a lot, and I can return to work when I feel like it." (Olga, 19)
- "My work motivates me. It is demanding; I have an opportunity to learn new things. It offers professional growth." (Jan, 24)
- I can read, write and do sums. That's all I need for a normal job …. You have to know the right people, that's all you need." (Edi, 18)
- "OK, suppose I go to the Labour Resources Centre to apply for a job? Be sure that if another pays bribes, I won't see any job." (Gheorghe, 19)

5 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

"I started because I felt that my family saw me as scum and good for nothing. Later I started enjoying it; I needed more money."

Petr, 19

Taking risks and testing the rules is part of growing up. Most young people knowingly break the law at some time, but few are arrested and very few embark on a life of crime. While the young people of the transition region are no exception, the upheavals of the last decade have been accompanied by a general increase in crime. Meanwhile, governments in the region are trying to reform their justice systems – a chance to build juvenile justice systems in line with international standards such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the 'Beijing Rules') and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Reported crime rates under communism were low compared to those in other industrialized countries and they still are today. However, the rates of reported crime by those aged 14-17 almost doubled between 1989 and 1998 in 16 of the 25 countries for which data are available. Disparities have increased, with rises generally taking place in countries where initial rates were high, as in Central Europe, and falls in the countries where rates were relatively low, such as Central Asia (Figure 11).

The Report finds other disturbing trends: large-scale under-reporting of crime, the growing numbers of young people who re-offend, relatively high numbers of offenders under the age of 14, increasing numbers of girls

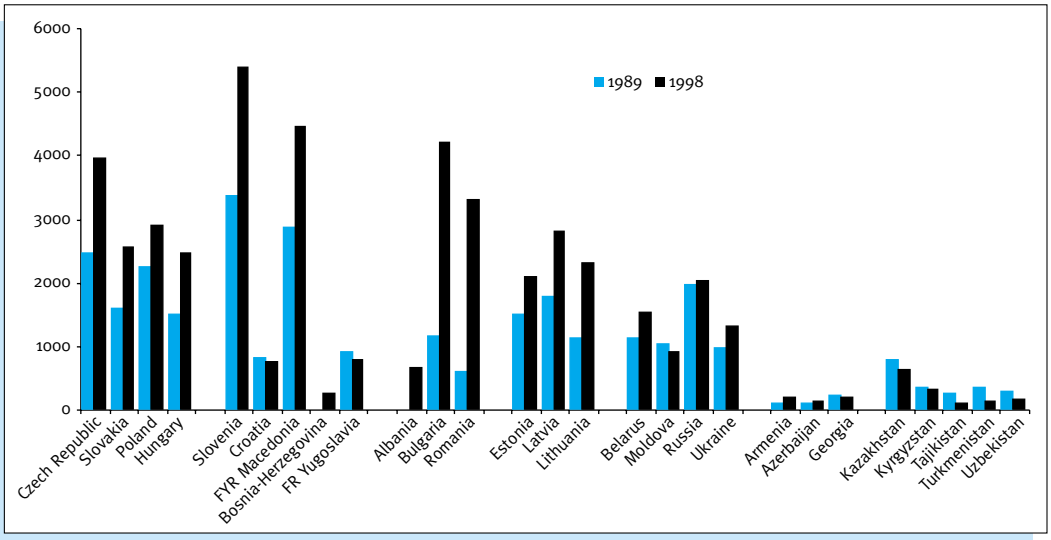

***Figure 11* – Juvenile crime rates, 1989 and 1998 (crimes per 100,000 relevant population)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 5.1.

charged with offences, and the emergence of new types of offences, such as drug-related crimes. While figures from 12 transition countries find that crime rates are generally higher among 18-24 year-olds than among 14-17 year-olds, the reverse is true in Poland and Bulgaria.

Youth crime is also changing in nature. Property offences account for more than two thirds of juvenile crimes in countries where data are available, but the share of violent crimes by young people is growing. The biggest increases have been in Poland, where violent crime rates among juveniles have quadrupled, and in Bulgaria where they have more than tripled. In Lithuania, violent crimes now account for more than 20 per cent of all juvenile crimes, the highest share in the region. There is also more disrespect for the rule of law. A 1997 study in Russia, for example, found that more than 25 per cent of 17 year-olds thought it acceptable to break the law to earn money.

The Report raises concerns about how unlawful offences are defined and processed, pinpointing two 'grey areas'. First, who handles them? There are many non-judicial bodies in the region dealing specifically with young offenders, such as the commissions for youth affairs found in the CIS countries. These generally handle children under the age of 14, while the courts usually deal with those over the age of 18. Juveniles – those aged 14-17 – can appear before either. This means that they may be treated quite differently for the same type of offence.

Second, how are offences defined? In some countries, including Estonia, property crimes such as petty theft, fall under non-criminal law. In other countries these are criminal offences and accused young people are more likely to come face to face with the full force of the legal system.

Depriving juveniles of their liberty should be seen as a last resort according to international human rights standards but the Report finds it over-used in the region, even before cases come to trial. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, boys charged with 'serious' offences, including minor property offences, are detained for an average of six months with one hour of daily exercise, no access to education, and no right to family visits. Pre-trial custody for juveniles in Albania can last more than eight months, with juveniles detained alongside accused adults.

Young people in correctional facilities face further risks. The Report cites a 1995 survey on secondary school-age children in the institutions of the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior, which found that 50 per cent reported unwanted sexual contact and up to 30 per cent reported having been raped. UNICEF surveys have found solitary confinement in juvenile facilities in all five Central Asian countries and restrictions on family visits in every Central Asia country except Kazakhstan.

Examining public policy responses to youth crime, the Report finds more use of suspended sentences and probation. In Estonia and Kazakhstan two thirds of juvenile sentences in 1998 were suspended, as were most cases in the Czech Republic and Lithuania. Russian authorities

report that probation for juvenile offenders more than doubled between 1992 and 1996. In Hungary, 61 per cent of juvenile offenders were put on probation in 1997.

The Report examines the role of the administrative bodies, such as the commissions for youth affairs, dealing with young offenders. While these non-judicial bodies present a better alternative to the formal legal system for young people, their authority to deprive offenders of their liberty is inconsistent with due process and international standards on youth justice. The Commission for Youth Affairs in Georgia, for example, can send young repeat offenders to a closed correctional institution for up to three years. In Slovenia, similar bodies initiate around 80 per cent of admissions to "institutions for children and youth with behavioural and personality disorders."

The Governments of the region have a unique opportunity to reform their justice systems to bring them into line with new democratic approaches. One issue stands out as needing urgent action, says the Report: the over-reliance on deprivation of liberty as a response to young offenders. While many countries have the political will to address this issue, alternatives are too slow to materialize, partly as a result of the lack of resources or properly trained personnel.

Voices of Youth

Young people in conflict with the law

- "You could make ends meet, but what kind of life is that?" (Jarda, 16)
- "Prison has changed me, but in a negative way – I now know how to behave real bad." (Martin, 18)
- Pretty often, violence is unavoidable." (Paul, 18)
- "It's important what kind of friends you have. Once you have been part of a gang, you get bored with normal people." (Martin, 18)

6 YOUNG CITIZENS

"I do not want to live in any other country, and I want to dedicate my life to my country. I need to get appropriate education and experience for this."

Mara, 21

Citizenship is one of the most basic rights of every human being – the recognition that a particular individual has a legitimate claim to be part of a country, to contribute to and to partake of its assets. The transition generation is the first new generation to have the right to citizenship in its fullest sense. What they do with that right has implications for the future of the region as a whole.

There is a growing international recognition that the best way to turn young people into active and engaged citizens is to encourage their participation in decision-making at all stages and in all areas, including the family, school, workplace and community.

This new focus on youth participation is particularly relevant to the new democracies of the transition region, where young people have vastly different expectations, and opportunities, from those of their parents. They expect, for example, to be able to exercise their full human rights. How well they do so will depend on how well they are recognized as partners in efforts to consolidate democracy and develop civil society. The presence of younger adults in high government posts shows that the doors are opening, and that many young people are grasping the new opportunities.

The Report finds that young people support the reforms of the last decade. Like young people in other regions, however, this does not necessarily mean that they vote. Opinion polls in 1995-97 found young people less prepared to vote than those over the age of 24 in 15 transition countries (Figure 12). Some studies suggest, however, that the generation gap between youth and adult turnout rates in the region throughout the 1990s was equal to or smaller than in the West.

It is clear, however, that many young people show a deep distrust of the new democratic institutions. A survey of young people aged 18-25 in Latvia in 1998, for example, found that 89 per cent thought that the activity of political parties had no relevance to them. In Russia, a 1998 survey of young people aged 18-29 found that two thirds of them had a highly negative view of the main democratic institutions. The Report looks at a range of factors that may make young people sceptical about political life: indecision, frustration with a transition that has been slower and more painful than expected, and a lack of trust in the state coupled with high expectations of the state's ability to provide an adequate standard of living.

Young people do, however, show a strong sense of democratic values. The Latvian survey found that 85 per cent of young people were interested in the political life of the country while the Russian study found that two thirds of young people thought it 'impermissible' to cancel presidential elec-

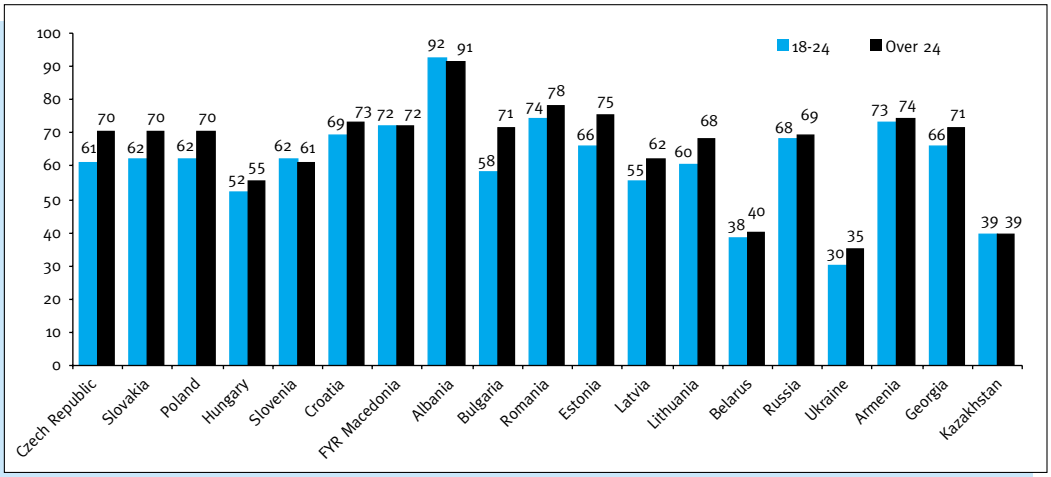

***Figure 12* – Intention to vote by age group 1995-97 (per cent)**
Source: RMR No. 7, Figure 6.1.

tions and ban meetings or demonstrations.

Focusing on civil society, the Report finds that this entire sector is still evolving. Under communism, most youth belonged to mass organizations controlled by the state, such as the Komsomol in the former Soviet Union. These were vehicles of social control and propaganda, but they did provide settings where young people could meet to enjoy sports and other activities. Their collapse means that young people have lost access to low cost sports and leisure facilities as well as to organizations that gave them a public and cohesive presence. What they have gained is the chance to take part in varied organizations and to make their own decisions about when and how to do so.

A study in the late 1990s estimated that in several countries fewer than 5 per cent of young people were members of social organizations and in contrast to the state controlled, mass organizations of the past, today's groups are often run by NGOs and are quite small.

The transition generation is becoming a distinct group of consumers and young people are challenging the conformist outlook of the past with their own cultural expression. Quoting research in Russia on the rich variety of youth cultures, the Report finds young people experimenting with different styles and taking their place in a global youth culture. While this may have its origins in the west, young Russians are adapting it to suit themselves, perceiving some aspects of Western life as superficial and lacking in community feeling or spirituality. They describe Western electronic music, for example, as "music for the body" and Russian folk or rock as "music for the soul" for example.

Many countries, including those in the transition region, are trying to create youth policies and to find the resources for their implementation. The Report cites the work of the European Union and the Council of Europe on youth issues. This includes the planned European statement on youth policy, of interest to those transition countries that have officially

applied for EU membership and for those participating in the broader forum of the Council of Europe.

The Report highlights four key goals that are emerging from the growing international dialogue on youth policies:

- participation of young people
- protection of vulnerable youth
- prevention of anti-social behaviour by young people
- guaranteeing and protecting the political, legal and social rights of young people.

There are two approaches to these goals: reactive and proactive. Reactive approaches are based on the notion that young people constitute some kind of problem group and are rarely part of a cohesive youth policy. Proactive approaches encourage young people to use their capacities to participate in the development of society. This means involving a wide variety of players, achieved most effectively at the local level. To avoid lack of coordination, clear national frameworks on youth policy are needed as well as national coordinating bodies.

The formulation of youth policy in the transition region suffers from the lack of earlier debate on this subject and the shadow cast by the former communist youth organizations. The Report sets out the progress that has been made on youth policies, from attempts to create national umbrella organizations for young people to the creation of ministries for youth.

It finds that young people are not a homogenous group. 'One-size-fits-all' policies are being replaced with a diversity of decentralized and more targeted interventions. There is little evidence so far, however, that youth-related policies and services are being built on adequate research, systematic youth involvement, monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, the Report concludes with a Policy Agenda, stressing the particular opportunities created by the transition for the 65 million young people in the region's 27 countries.

Voices of Youth

Young citizens

- "(Influencing political decisions) is very important to me. Even if these decisions do not affect the whole country, I would like to be able to express my opinion." (Maija, 21)
- "I would like others (at school) to respect my opinion and be interested in it." (Albert, 15)
- "This is my life. I cannot imagine myself sitting in front of the TV in the evening while I could help someone in the meantime." (Irina, 17)
- "I like doing voluntary work because it allows me to meet very interesting people; the ones who motivate me to do things." (Gaatis, 18)
- "If you do something and succeed, your motivation is increased." (Ina, 16)

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

Young People in Changing Societies focuses on the experiences of the 'transition generation' – the 65 million young people aged 15-24 in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. They are putting the reforms of the last decade to the test as the first generation to complete their education, look for jobs and make decisions about raising families in a new socio-economic climate.

The Report looks at their health, their education, their entry into the labour market, their possible conflicts with the law and their role as young citizens, finding that progress for young people and progress in the transition are mutually supportive. Young people are grasping their new opportunities with initiative, creativity and flexibility. But new freedoms also mean new risks, including challenges almost unknown to earlier generations: unemployment, drugs, greater inequality and exclusion.

Highlighting young people as a resource, rather than a problem group, the Report calls for a new dialogue with young people to create youth-friendly policies.

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
Piazza SS. Annunziata, 12
50122 Florence, Italy

Tel.: +39 055 203 30
Fax: +39 055 244 817
E-mail (general information): florence@unicef.org
E-mail (publication orders): florence.orders@unicef.org

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