

# 2010 Human Development Report: Eastern Europe and Central Asia found highly 'equitable', but life expectancy declines slow area's long-term development progress

*Recent EU entrants among the top ranked in the 2010 HDI, but former Soviet republics losing ground in life expectancy in recent decade, 20th anniversary Report reveals*

**United Nations, 4 November 2010**—The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report*, in a detailed new review of global progress in recent decades as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), shows that most Eastern European countries made major gains in this period of profound regional change, but the largest countries from the former Soviet Union suffered severe health setbacks.



Launched today in a ceremony with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, the 2010 Report—*The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*—examines progress in health, education and income since 1970, as measured by the HDI, for the 135 countries for which comparable data is available.

This 40-year period encompasses an era of profound political and economic transformation throughout the region, including the transition at the midpoint from the centralized controls of the Soviet era to the independence of the former Soviet republics and the reclaimed sovereignty and democratization of many other nations in the region. This was accompanied by a swift and often

difficult integration into the international market economy, with sometimes-disruptive impacts on health and living standards.

The trends analysis reveals that Eastern Europe and Central Asia have the highest “underperformance” rates—countries whose progress on the HDI is significantly below what would have been predicted by their initial stage of development. The greatest single factor was health declines: average life expectancy in the Russian Federation dropped from 69 in 1970 to 67 in 2010, in neighboring Belarus from 71 to 70, and Ukraine from 71 to 69, the Report shows.

“Although the collapse of socialist and communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union presented new economic and political opportunities, the transition process affected countries in the region differently,” said Jeni Klugman, the Report’s lead author. “The introduction of democratic practices, for example, while an



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enormous achievement did not necessarily translate into sustained human development achievements on other fronts.”

On the positive side, literacy rates have been consistently high and increasing throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with an average of 96 percent in 2010, up from 91 percent in 1970. In terms of years of schooling, the Czech Republic and Estonia perform best, each with an average of 12 years. Turkey lags behind, with 6.5 mean years of schooling, with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (8.2 years) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (8.7).

Overall, Eastern Europe and Central Asia have a relatively high per capita income of US\$11,462, but this varies from more than \$20,000 for European Union members like Slovakia and the Czech Republic to less than \$3,000 in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

## **2010 Human Development Index**

The 2010 HDI, which introduces technical adjustments to some its traditional indicators in health, education and income for 169 countries, illustrates a wide range of national development across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. (Due to the methodological refinements, the 2010 country rankings are not comparable to those from previous years.)

The eight countries in the top or ‘very high’ human development category in the new HDI are all recent European Union entrants: the Czech Republic (28), Slovenia (29), Slovakia (31), Malta (33), Estonia (34), Cyprus (35), Hungary (36) and Poland (41). Most other countries are in the second ‘high human development’ HDI quartile, with five in the ‘medium’ category: Turkmenistan (87) and Moldova (99) as well as Uzbekistan (102), Kyrgyzstan (109) and Tajikistan (112).

In addition to the 40-year trends analysis and the 2010 HDI, the 2010 *Human Development Report* introduces three new indices that capture inequality, multidimensional poverty and gender gaps.

In its new measure of inequality, taking into account disparities in health, education and income in 139 countries, Eastern Europe emerges on average as the most equitable region in the developing world. The Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia have the smallest losses—6-7 percent—on the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, while Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic Republics experience losses of 11-12 percent; Turkmenistan suffered an HDI loss of 26 percent.

The Gender Inequality Index—which captures gender gaps in reproductive health, empowerment and workforce participation in 138 countries—reveals that the percentage of women in parliament is relatively low throughout the region, though they are close to parity with men in educational attainment and employment in most countries. The overall loss due to gender inequality in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is 19 percent; South Asia, by contrast, had the largest regional loss, with 35 percent.

Reports from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan suggest an upsurge in traditionalism with calls to re-establish polygamy and change laws to make it more difficult for women to initiate divorce. Arranged marriages have increased, and bride payments and “bride-napping” have re-emerged in some countries, the Report notes by way of caution.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)—which identifies serious deprivations in health, education and living standards in 104 countries—shows that “multidimensional” poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is relatively rare, affecting 3 percent of the population, compared to 10 percent in Latin America and 65 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, for example. Tajikistan has the region’s highest share of multidimensionally poor, at 17 percent. But MPI rates are close to zero in several countries, with higher figures of 5-7 percent found in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. These relatively low figures reflect specific MPI indicators and do not imply an absence of otherwise severe economic hardship in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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For more information on the 20th anniversary *Human Development Report* and the complete press kit please visit: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

*ABOUT THIS REPORT:* Since its inception in 1990, the *Human Development Report* has provided fresh insights into some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. The *Human Development Report* is an independent yearly publication of the United Nations Development Programme. Jeni Klugman is the lead author of the 2010 Report, which is translated into more than a dozen languages and launched in more than 100 countries annually. The Report is published in English by Palgrave Macmillan. Complete texts of the 2010 Report and all previous Reports since 1990 are available for free downloading in major UN languages on the Report website: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

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