



## SDGs FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SDGs

Tracking progress in achieving youth-related SDG and ICPD goals in Europe and Central Asia  
4-6 December 2017, Sofia, BULGARIA

### **Background**

The youth (15 – 24 years old) in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region numbers around 58 millions (51% male, 49% female) comprising nearly 30%<sup>1</sup> of the total population. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines “youth” - those age 15 to 24 and “young people”, as those age 10 to 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.

The ECA region is comprised by high and middle-income economies, and is home to a large number of children from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and groups. There are an estimated 5.1 million children with disabilities in the region, of which 3.6 million are estimated to be out of school<sup>2</sup>.

Access to pre-primary, lower and upper secondary education remains a challenge in many countries, particularly for the most marginalized, including children with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic groups such as the Roma, and children from poorest households.

Young people face challenges with higher education including vocational education and training to strengthen skills matching with private sector needs; engagement and participation in national and local decision-making including in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes that affect them; leadership development and knowledge building; psychosocial and healthy lifestyle support; and networking, among others.

Youth unemployment stands at 20.1 per cent in early 2017. Young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment, which have strong links to migration trends. Youth who are neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEETs) across the region ranges from 5 per cent or fewer in the Netherlands and Norway to over 30 per cent in Albania and Armenia<sup>3</sup>.

The incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among young people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is on the rise, and the region has one of the world’s fastest-growing HIV epidemics, with the majority of reported infections among young people.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia 32 of every 1,000 births are among adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19, compared with 10 of every 1,000 births in the older EU member states<sup>4</sup>. Unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions remain common, as do inequities in access to maternal health and family planning services.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: UN Statistics Division (<http://unstats.un.org>) 2011-2013 data and population from 15-29 years old. Data from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are from 2003, and Kazakhstan from 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Source: UNICEF (2015): “Focus on Children with Disabilities in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, P.2.

<sup>3</sup> Source: ILO (2017): “What future for decent work in Europe and Central Asia: Opportunities and challenges, P.8.

<sup>4</sup> Source: UNFPA (2014) “Investing in Young People in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, P.10.



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Europe and Central Asia regional review beyond 2014 of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) implementation culminated in the UNECE Regional Conference “Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, held in Geneva on 1-2 July, 2013, organized jointly by UNECE and UNFPA. It was hosted and chaired by the Government of Switzerland, while the Russian Federation served as a vice-chair. The conference produced as its outcome a Chair’s Summary that highlighted progress achieved in the region, and made recommendations for the future in three thematic areas: “Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development”, “Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights”, “Families, and Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course”. This outcome underscored the need for better integration of population dynamics into development planning at the national and sub-national levels in order to ensure a comprehensive response to demographic change (low fertility, population ageing, migration patterns, etc.), and the need to take a long-term, holistic, and rights-based approach to population dynamics and its interlinkages with sustainable development. Additionally, actions that ensured investment in building human capabilities with special attention to young people, the advancement of gender equality, and addressing root causes of inequalities, particularly in access to education, sexual and reproductive health services and employment, as well as actions that ensured attention to vulnerable groups and families were highlighted as central to fulfilling ICPD commitments.

In September 2015, the Head of States formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making a historic moment that set the world’s development agenda for the next 15 years. However, the SDGs are not legally binding. Each government will decide how to implement the ambitious goals based on their own national contexts. The agenda calls upon the commitment of all actors: from governments and members of parliament to private sector, from research community to civil society actors, including youth organizations and networks.

Young people and youth-led organizations need to have the space and recognition to participate in translation of the agenda into local, national and regional policy, in implementation, in monitoring and review, and in holding governments accountable. Young people need structured mechanism for participation through decision-making, ideally in co-decision manner, and especially in areas that have a clear impact on young people. With right political commitment and adequate fund allocation, young people can fulfil their roles — and that way make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

### ***Purpose and Objectives***

Europe and Central Asia regional dialogue will bring together young people and representatives of youth-led organizations, policy makers, statisticians, regional partners and UN agencies to (1) review progress and identify priorities in advancing the youth agenda of the ICPD and 2030 Agenda, and (2) discuss synergies between the ICPD Beyond 2014 regional review outcomes and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



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More specifically, the event will:

- Contribute to the youth component of the regional monitoring framework for tracking progress of ICPD beyond 2014 outcome informed by the Chair's Summary implementation of the UNECE Regional Conference "Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"; and
- Provide framework for youth advocacy and lobbying with national governments and in regional ICPD & SDGs processes

The meeting will possibilities for cooperation between countries in addressing the needs of young people.

### **Participants**

**The consultation will bring together some 40 participants:** young people, representatives of youth-led organizations, policy makers – national and/or local/municipal level, statisticians, and regional partners and UN agencies.

### **Outcomes**

- An outcome document in the form of suggestions to UNECE experts group on youth dimension of regional monitoring framework for tracking and reporting progress of ICPD in UNECE region.
- Young people improve capacity and gain skills to analyse and use data for ICPD/SDG and policy monitoring, implementation and advocacy.
- Regional advocacy platform on youth launched.
- The meeting report will include key highlights from the discussions and summary of the commitments and way forward for collaboration.
- Elected young person to be a member of the UNECE Experts group on regional monitoring framework on ICPD.
- Strengthened multi-stakeholders collaboration on youth agenda in ECA region.

### **Structure**

The meeting plenum will be in English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation. Group work considers language abilities.

The first two days provide an opportunity for participants to explore on what has been advanced, what are the youth related issues of concern and validate them against ICPD and SDGs targets and indicators framework.

The third day will be devoted to suggestions on how advocacy and lobbying on youth issues at ECA regional, at national and local level could be advanced in the era of SDGs and ICPD regional review process.

### **Organizers**

The event is jointly organized by the National Center of Public Health and Analyses (NCPHA) of Bulgaria, the International Institute for Youth Development PETRI-Sofia, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office.



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**Draft Agenda**

**December 4th, 2017 - Day 1**

<b>Morning session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome &amp; Opening Remarks</li><li>• Introduction of participants – who is in the room</li><li>• Information session: presentation of background information on SDGs and ICPD</li></ul>
<b>Lunch break</b>	
<b>Afternoon session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working groups : identifying young people’s needs and challenges in the 4 thematic areas discussed (health, education, employment, and civic engagement) in the ECA region</li><li>• Discussion: prioritization of the identified needs and challenges</li></ul>

**December 5th, 2017 - Day 2**

<b>Morning session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work on the indicators: validate prioritized needs and challenges against ICPD and SDGs targets and indicators framework, reflection on new possible indicators</li></ul>
<b>Lunch break</b>	
<b>Afternoon session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using data for advocacy and policy-making and change on youth issues at the regional, national and local level</li></ul>

**December 6th, 2017 - Day 3**

<b>Morning session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expanding possibilities for young people’s participation in policy making in the ECA region</li></ul>
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<b>Lunch break</b>	
<b>Afternoon session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Follow up &amp; commitments</li><li>● Election of a young representative as a member of the UNECE Experts group on regional monitoring framework on ICPD</li><li>● Launch of the regional advocacy platform on youth</li><li>● Closing Remarks</li></ul>