



Regional Conference

Population and Development Dialogue: Building Human Capital for Prosperity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

11-13 June 2014
Prague, Czech Republic

Introduction

Two decades after the adoption of the landmark Cairo Programme of Action by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and a year before the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, a wealth of material is available in Eastern Europe and Central Asia on the progress that has been made and the gaps that still exist in putting the ICPD agenda and the MDG goals into practice.

This is the result of the comprehensive *ICPD Beyond 2014* review process and a series of consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, both carried out at the national, regional and global levels. The ICPD Beyond 2014 review process culminated, at the regional level, in a high-level conference, “Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century”, organized by UNFPA and UNECE in Geneva in July 2013.

These processes and events have not only provided a better understanding of existing implementation gaps and emerging issues of concern in the region, but also resulted in a host of recommendations on how to build on the progress made and address the remaining challenges.

With the goal of supporting national authorities in implementing these recommendations and further the ICPD agenda in their countries, UNFPA is initiating and fostering a dialogue among high-level policy-makers and experts on how to respond to the population challenges faced in the region. The initiative will take into account the outcome of the above-mentioned review processes, and serve as a platform to discuss current population trends and how they can be addressed in line with international standards to ensure the development of more competitive and prosperous societies.

The regional conference that will host the first dialogue event will bring together ministers, high-level officials and experts from the region and will take place on 11-13 June 2014 in Prague, Czech Republic. The Regional Conference is organized UNFPA with the support of MoFA of Czech Republic.

Background

The EECA region is facing a number of far-reaching demographic changes. Birth rates remain at low levels in many countries of the region, influenced by factors such as high unemployment, uncertain economic prospects, high costs for housing and childcare, and the increasing age of parents at the birth of their first child. At the same time, the number of elderly people is rapidly increasing, affecting the age structure of societies. Life expectancy in the region is increasing for women, but remains stagnant for men, mostly due to lifestyle-related diseases. Family structures are changing, with the size of households



decreasing and family support options diminishing. The changing nature of migration has far-reaching effects on societies, both in the sending and receiving countries. For many young people, in particular, transition from one life stage to the next has become ever more complex, as traditional life course planning is complicated by changing societies and economies.

National-level policy-makers must respond and adapt rapidly to these trends in order to meet societies' development expectations and ensure future prosperity and competitiveness. In some countries of the region this process has already become a priority; in others it is still in its infancy.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the event is to initiate a dialogue among high-level policy-makers and experts aimed at gaining a better understanding of the impact of current demographic changes on societies in the region, and identifying ways to respond through national policies reflecting the principles enshrined in the ICPD Programme of Action and other relevant international documents and instruments. The event will mark the beginning of an inclusive, innovative, and pragmatic regional process that is focused on generating concrete results at the country level, including through partnerships among and within countries.

More specifically, the event will serve to:

- provide a regional platform for reflexion and exchange of experiences, support, lessons learned and know-how to enhance country-level planning, policy development, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity-building; and
- mobilize political support for addressing existing gaps;
- establish a core group of senior policy-makers and population and development experts from academia and civil society.

Focus areas

The event will focus on two broad areas of critical importance in the region to kick off the dialogue process:

- Adolescents and youth
- Family, gender equality and fertility

Outcome

The outcome document will include a regional situation analysis based on research completed prior to the event, a summary of interventions by policy-makers and experts, and a list of recommendations made during the meeting, as well as a section on development scenarios. The report will be issued after the event.

The event is also expected to lead to the establishment of a core group of policy-makers willing to act as champions of the dialogue process. This group is to be supported by a small “think tank” of leading experts.

Participation

The conference will bring together some 100 representatives of governmental authorities, including high-level officials, academia and civil society organizations, as well as other national and international stakeholders. The meeting is expected to be attended by the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director.



Structure

The conference will be held in English with a simultaneous translation in Russian language.

Day one will be devoted to *high-level policy-makers* kicking off discussions by highlighting national priorities in the selected focus areas. Some 40 high-level officials (typically one from the planning or development ministry, and one from a relevant sectorial ministry) will join this segment, speaking from a policy development and planning perspective on possible short-term and long-term strategies for the selected focus areas in their countries and in the region. They will identify key components of a roadmap for implementing the ICPD agenda, and will make proposals on the future of the dialogue process to be launched at the Prague event.

Day two will provide an opportunity for in-depth expert discussions on policy responses and their impact. The experts will discuss, complement and validate existing analysis related to the focus areas. They will identify research gaps, persisting challenges, emerging issues and future priorities. The outcome of this discussion will be presented at the end of the day to provide an informed basis for policy making.

Day three will be devoted to sharing experience in development and implementation of evidence based policies in the thematic areas of the conference.

The experts will also be encouraged to initiate a compendium of institutional resources and technical capacities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and identify existing gaps. They will develop a plan to address these capacity gaps, possibly comprising a combination of East-East technical assistance schemes, capacity development activities, and the use of technical resources from outside the region.

Background documents

The documents developed in the context of the *ICPD Beyond 2014* review in the region will serve as main background material (<http://eeca.unfpa.org/news/regional-icpd-beyond-2014-conference-ends-strong-reaffirmation-cairo-principles>). In addition, academic institutions will prepare an analytical paper on population dynamics and trends in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.