

1 Youth in Transition



This Report is the seventh in the series of Regional Monitoring Reports from the MONEE project of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Its theme is a generation in transition – 65 million young people aged 15-24 who live in the 27 countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

When people in the region embraced democratic change and rejected communism a decade ago, they made a choice for a future that would be very different from what they had known. For many, it was a decision to change their own circumstances, but also their children's futures. This Report explores what has happened with the children of 1989 as they have grown into teenagers and young adults over the past decade. The state of this transition generation is important not only because one day they will be running their countries, but because they have a major role to play in building these nations today – in sustaining families and in advancing the progress towards market economies, democratic governments and civil societies.

The youngest of this generation were born in the mid-1980s when “perestroika” first raised hopes of a new future for the region. They started school in the early 1990s when their countries were already carrying out major economic, political and social reforms. Today they are leaving basic education behind, and the questions arise: Are they better or worse off in terms of a good start in life? Has the transition brought about improvements in their health? Do they have enriched choices in terms of education, jobs and family?

And what has happened to the oldest members of this transition generation, those who were already in their mid-teens when the transition began? How have they fared in the emerging labour markets? Have they found a place of their own in the new democracies? How has the changing social environment meshed with the questing nature of youth?

This Report aims to answer these questions. In doing so, it recognizes an important coincidence: young people in the region are going through their own individual transformation from childhood to adulthood at the same time that their countries are negotiating the passage from authoritarianism to democracy. It is therefore a crucial time of growth for nations and their young people alike. And, in many ways, the ups and downs, the gains and losses and the missed opportunities of the transition nations are amplified and played out in the lives of their young people.

This first chapter introduces different dimensions of

the transition youth make in their own lives and places youth against the background of the transition their countries are making. It looks at the young people who are moving from school into the world of work – an aspect of life where the larger economic transformation is radically altering the stakes. It describes how the family life of young people shifts from one centred around parents to one with more autonomy and responsibility for youth. It is this area where the behaviour of youth has contributed most directly to the accelerated demographic change that has occurred in the region since 1989, a change with longer term implications for both individuals and societies.

Each of the following five chapters focuses on a particular aspect of young people's lives. Chapter 2 examines the health of youth, including life style choices and their immediate and longer term implications. Chapter 3 explores what has happened to youth in the changing education systems in the region. Chapter 4 analyses how young people have been faring in the job market, a critical issue also in many established market economies. Chapter 5 sheds light on the social and economic stress experienced by the younger generation by focusing on a particular high-risk population – young people in conflict with the law. Chapter 6 considers how young people in the region are taking up their right and responsibility to participate in and contribute to their changing societies. Not only is participation one of the great themes of the transition in the region, but, as Box 1.1 describes, it is a growing concern for youth around the world.

This Report, like earlier Regional Monitoring Reports, makes its observations through the lens of quantitative information collected through statistical offices in the 27 countries of the region and from various international surveys and studies. These data, often little known and used outside the countries in which they have been collected, are an essential element in any attempt to describe what has happened in the lives of young people in the region.

However, quantitative data of this sort do not paint a full picture. In particular, they do not reveal how young people feel about what is happening to them and the countries in which they live. The Report, therefore, also makes use of qualitative information which records young people's own views of their lives. This information comes in various forms, including opinion polls and surveys conducted by other organizations.

One element is provided by the responses of some 200 young people gathered in focus-group discussions and

The new international focus on youth: rights and participation

Participation is one of the great themes of the transition: pursuing and creating opportunities in a market economy, voting and exercising choice in political life, being active and involved in civil society, shaping daily and national life by taking part in decision-making at all levels and in all areas of endeavour.

This focus on participation in the transition region coincides with a growing focus in the international community on youth participation in society. Young people are increasingly recognized as an economic, political and social force and as a distinct segment of society in which individuals are entitled to the full set of human rights. This rights-based approach to youth participation is, in many ways, an evolution of progress on the rights of children, captured in the landmark 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child presented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. This international human rights treaty covers every person under the age of 18 in the world, some two billion individuals.

The Convention, an extraordinary consensus by the world's governments, establishes new ethical principles and international norms of behaviour towards children. It ensures children in all situations their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and it calls on governments, even those with scarce resources, to take action to protect children's rights – rights to survival, health and education, to a caring family environment, play and culture, to protection from exploitation and abuse of all kinds.

The Convention has four general principles:

- Children have a right to survival and development in all aspects of their lives, including the physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, social, and cultural.
- Children must not suffer discrimination “irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”
- The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions or actions that affect the child or children as a group. This holds true whether decisions are made by governmental, administrative, or judicial authorities, or by families themselves.
- Children must be allowed as active participants in all matters affecting their lives and be free to express their opinions. They have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously.

There are four primary settings in which the participation of children and young adults takes place: at home, at school, at work, and in the community – and participation in each arena is a positive reinforcement for being active in the others.

The family is usually the young person's first experience of participation. The family's basic role is to provide a protective and caring environment for children and youth, ensuring that they grow up healthy and with adequate life skills. It also plays a role in how young people feel about expressing their opinions and shaping decisions which affect their lives.

School can offer formal instruction in civics, but can also promote the development of life skills which foster participation – critical thinking, informed decision-making, negotiation skills, conflict resolution. Participation can be developed through teachers who listen to students, through opportunities and venues where students can express their views and through involvement in school decision-making processes.

Work permits young people to participate in the economic life of their country both as producers and as consumers. There is even a trend in market economies towards more participation by employees in decision-making in the workplace. This emphasis on initiative and responsibility on the job can positively influence a young person's participation in other aspects of his or her life.

Civil society offers many opportunities for productive participation: leisure and cultural groups, volunteer social services, hobby and interest groups, environmental and other social issue associations, religious and political organizations. This type of participation is often at the local level where it has a direct impact on the lives of youth in the community. It also provides experience and training for young leaders who want to make the voices of youth heard at national and international levels.

Any discussion on participation evokes the “mirror” problem of social exclusion and marginalization among some youth. Targeted “outreach” measures are needed to promote positive participation by these youth in society and to counteract the conditions which have led to the exclusion.

In the transition region, these settings are all undergoing change, and ensuring that the changes do not leave youth behind is vital. In the communist societies of the past, participation by youth was all about conforming; in the new transition societies, guided by human rights and democratic values, participation is all about making a difference.

individual interviews carried out for this Report in six transition countries. The results of this exercise are reported in a series of panels, Voices of Youth, which appear throughout the Report. The responses are also referred to at various points in the main text. These “voices” are not

intended to be representative of all young people in the countries concerned, but their messages provide vital insight into the situation of youth in the region and complement the picture drawn from other sources. ■

1.1 Youth Enter a Changing World

Young people in the region have been growing up in an unsettled time: the rigid structures of the past are in disarray, sometimes ruins; the promised future is not yet fully realized and sometimes barely envisioned. They are their parents' children, but, in many ways, they have not and cannot inherit their parents' legacy: the “generation gap” between this transition generation and the adults in their lives is therefore unique.

The relationship between the younger and older generations is described in the words of young people from the region in the panel Voices of Youth 1.

The measure of youth

The 65 million people aged 15-24 who lived in the transition region in 1999 represent a large enough population to constitute their own nation, and in many ways they do, as the “youth nation”. However, they also represent the diversity and richness of the many countries and cultures in the region. Despite its size and richness, this youth nation has not been well recognized as a distinct population, a cohort which is as different from children as it is from adults. In this regard, youth are a new nation and part of an international youth community which is receiving growing attention worldwide.

Young people, on the one hand, share many characteristics with children – needing and deserving care and protection, support and guidance. They are still at a stage of life, like children, where they often live in the parental home and remain in full-time education, a period of important personal and social development. On the other hand, they are also moving into adulthood. They are becoming independent from the family home and increasingly part of their own social set. They are exposed to and make decisions about risk-taking behaviour. They are preparing for entry into the labour market and for setting up their own homes and families.

The balancing act required to straddle these two stages of life is often crudely declared: young people under age 18 are considered children and enjoy all the protections and benefits of children. But, crossing the threshold of a single birthday, usually age 18, young people find themselves entrusted with – or have thrust upon them – all the legal rights and responsibilities of adulthood. In fact, the issue of who is a child, a juvenile, or a youth and who is an adult is very much a live one in many

Young people talk about the generation gap

The generation gap that typically exists between young people and adults has particular dimensions in the transition region. Many institutions and processes, including social norms, that facilitate a smooth transition from one generation to the next in any society are, in the transition region, weakened, dismantled, simply absent, under construction, or being fundamentally reformed. The voices below belong to young employees and entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic and young people doing volunteer work in Latvia.

- “Our parents lived under a regime which suppressed individuality. This is not the case with young people.” (Ilona, 23)
- “In my opinion, 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)
- “Young people are more aggressive [in the workplace], older people are more accommodating.” (Ivana, 24)
- “I suppose older people in our country are influenced by communism.” (Ivo, 24)
- “I have found that older people have difficulties in accepting a better paid young person.” (Petra, 21)
- “I have no problem with older subordinates. I want them to perform at the same level as young colleagues, and they do.” (Ladislav, 24)
- “Today there are much more opportunities than before 1989. This is not only the question of opportunity to travel. Also career opportunities are bigger. Young people can sell their abilities in the labour market, what was not possible before. But it is not only a matter of change in regime. The whole society is unfolding very rapidly. For those who are not able to adapt quickly, there could be difficulties. . . . [Older generations] have different values and opinions than young people.” (Daniel, 30)
- “In my opinion, old and young people are moving in different directions.” (Ilse, 21)
- “I think it would be better to get closer.” (Kaspars, 24)

countries and, certainly, within the international community (Box 1.2).

Figure 1.1 shows the geographical distribution of the youth nation among the 27 countries of the region in 1999. The 22 million youth in Russia represent one-third of the total, while, at the other end of the spectrum,

Age concepts and the developmental stages of children and youth

The concepts of “child” and “youth” should recognize and build upon the developmental stages of life. It is increasingly understood that human needs and capacities differ significantly at the various stages of life and that these distinct periods of life build upon and reinforce each other. Unfortunately, however, there is no strong consensus in national and international practices on how to classify human life into different “age slices”. Often, for example, youth are not identified as a separate group in statistics.

Typically, national concepts used for children and youth reflect the ages prescribed by law for males and for females with regard to:

- compulsory education
- employment and child labour
- consent to sexual acts
- legal majority and political enfranchisement
- first marriage
- access to certain services without parental consent
- entitlements to certain public benefits and programmes

To a large degree, prescribed ages reflect how “youth” is understood as a social concept and as a target of public policies. Statistics can positively or negatively reinforce this understanding. When, for example, health data are collected for 15-45 year-olds (a category

often used for HIV/AIDS reporting), this renders adolescents invisible. Similarly, when pregnancy statistics refer to 15-19 year-olds as a group, the data are dominated by the higher rates for 18-19 year-olds, masking those for 15-17 year-olds.

UN terminology and practices include the following main concepts for children and youth:

- children: those people under 18 years of age
- adolescents: those people aged 10-19 (including early, middle and late adolescence)
- youth: those people aged 15-24
- young people: all those aged 10-24 (a concept which directly recognizes that many interventions for youth are too late at age 15)

The central concept of this Report is youth as defined by the UN terminology. However, the Report also uses more detailed age breakdowns (at times reflecting the practices of national statistical services) or other definitions as appropriate or convenient. These include terms such as puberty, teenagers and young adults (the latter used here for both 18-24 and 20-24 year-olds). The term “young people” is used in the Report as a general term for the younger cohorts of the population. At times it is used interchangeably with “youth”; hence “young people” as used in the Report does not necessarily imply the inclusion of those aged 10-14.

Estonia and Slovenia each have fewer than 300,000 young people aged 15-24, less than half of 1 percent of the region’s total. About one youth in 10 in the region is in Ukraine, and another one-tenth are in Poland. The fourth largest concentration is in Uzbekistan, with 7 percent. Overall, the five Central Asian states (including Kazakhstan) have over 10 million youth, 16 percent of the region’s total.

Figure 1.2 describes the size of the youth nation in a different way, showing the share youth represents within the population as a whole. The diagram combines the countries into the seven geographic groupings used in the Regional Monitoring Reports: Central Europe, former Yugoslavia, the other countries of Southeastern Europe, the Baltic States, the western CIS, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (including Kazakhstan). The 15-24 population has a rather uniform share among the country groups. For the region as a whole, just under one in six persons (16 percent) is of this age, with the figure ranging from one in seven in the Baltics to nearly one in five in Central Asia.

The diagram also shows the population shares for people aged 0-14, 25-59 and 60 and over. Taken together, the age groups 0-14 and 15-24 make up 38 percent of the

region’s population, ranging from 55 percent in Central Asia down to 33 percent in the Baltics. At the individual country level, the extremes are Tajikistan and Bulgaria; it will not be quite the same experience being a young person in these two countries, in one of which 61 percent of the population is below age 25 and in the other 31 percent.

The shares shown in Figure 1.2 have been affected by significant changes right across the region in fertility and in the size of the child cohorts born since 1989, points discussed later in the chapter. However, the size (as opposed to the share) of the youth population reflects fertility pre-transition, including the pronatalist policies and the demographic waves after the Second World War which affected the size of their parents’ generation.

Political change, death and migration

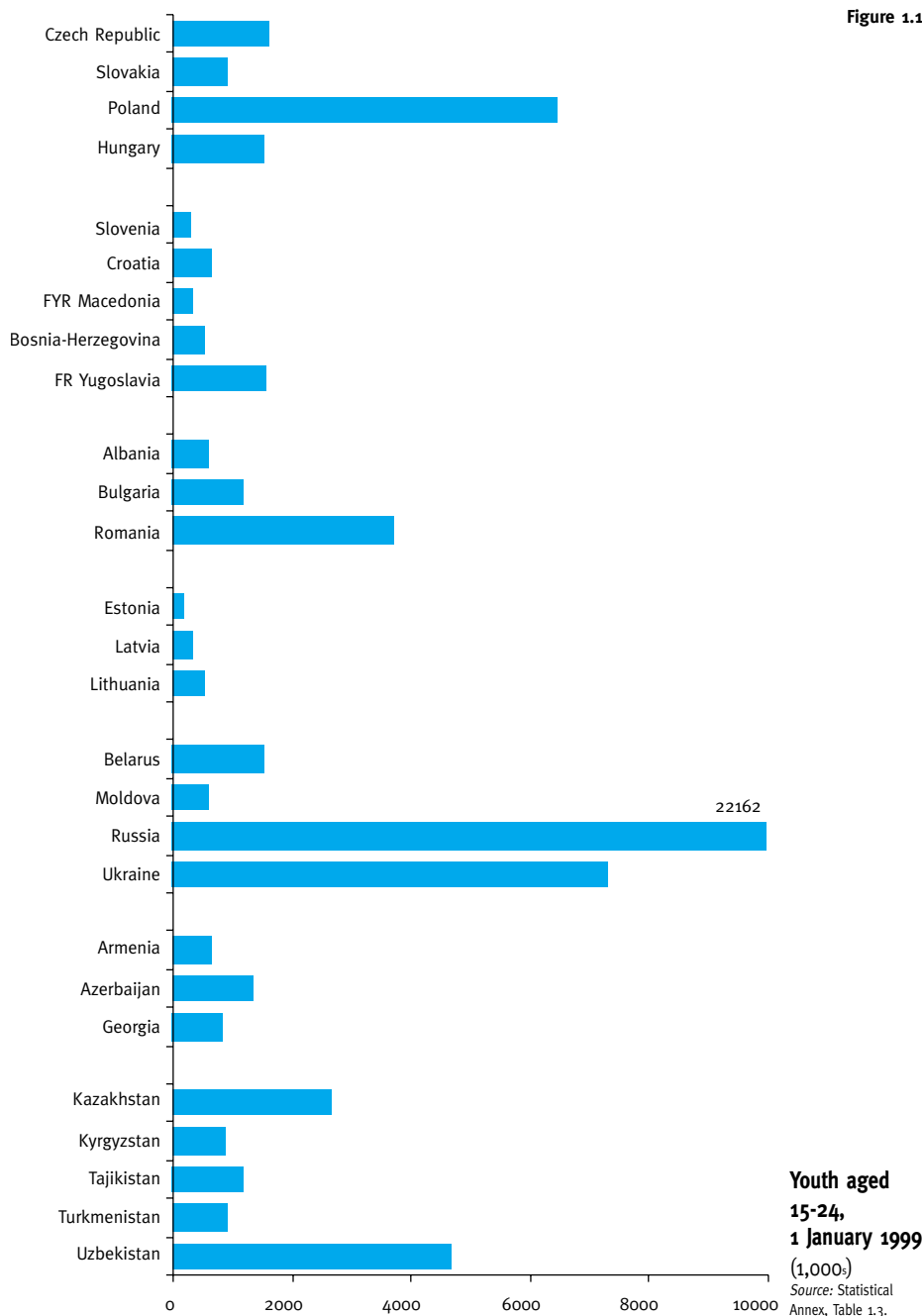
The generation of children aged 5-14 at the outset of the transition in 1989 are today’s young people aged 15-24, meaning that this generation has made its transition from childhood to youth during the decade of political, economic and social transition that has occurred in the region. What have been the key changes of the societal transition

and how have they been played out in this transition generation?

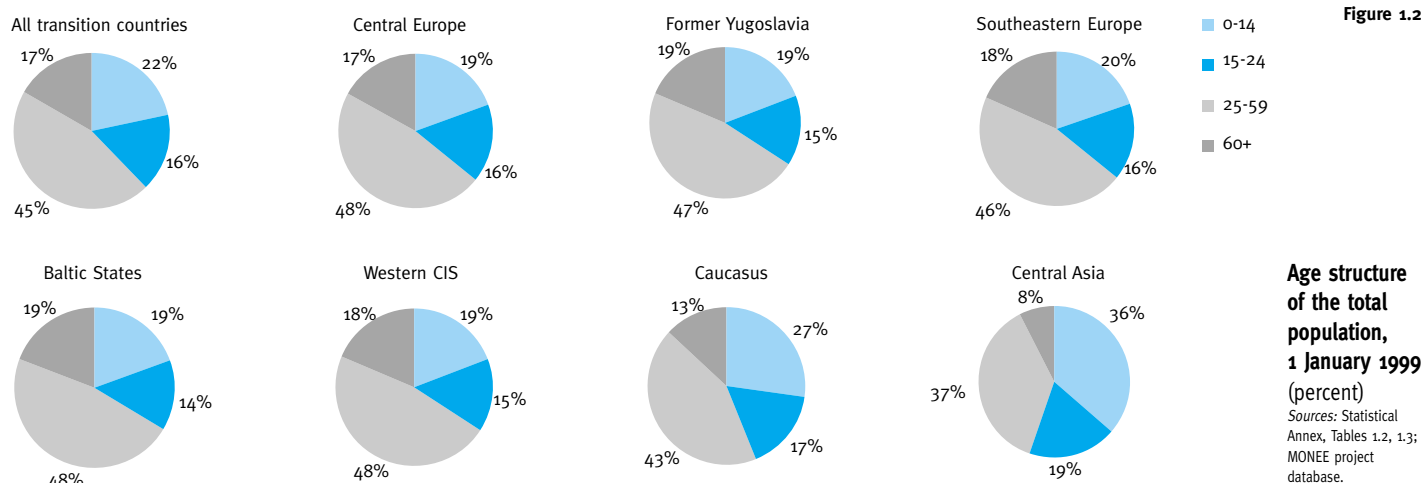
In terms of political change, one of the big promises of the transition was the restoration of the independence and sovereignty of nations. The political map of eight nations which existed in 1989 has been redrawn to include five of the original countries, plus 22 newly independent nations born out of the former Czechoslovakia, SFR Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Sovereignty, independence and parliamentary systems were established or reestablished quickly. Box 1.3 looks at how young people in the region view these changes and underlines that their opinions tend to be more favourable than those of older people.

What happened to the size of the transition generation between 1989 and 1999? Table 1.2 shows the numbers of persons who were children aged 5-14 in 1989 and youth aged 15-24 in 1999, together with estimated numbers for deaths and migration. The cohort became slightly smaller over that time. In 1989, there were 67 million children aged 5-14; in 1999 there were 65.5 million youth aged 15-24; the difference is 1.5 million. The generation has also changed in terms of its distribution among the countries of the region.

About a half-million members of this generation are estimated by the MONEE project to have died between 1989 and 1999. (The figures for deaths in Table 1.2 are only estimates, as the project does not have available the number of deaths for each individual birth cohort; the estimates are made on the basis of mortality rates for several age ranges.) Death comes all too early in life for some members of any generation in every country,



Youth aged 15-24, 1 January 1999
(1,000s)
Source: Statistical Annex, Table 1.3.



Age structure of the total population, 1 January 1999
(percent)
Sources: Statistical Annex, Tables 1.2, 1.3; MONEE project database.

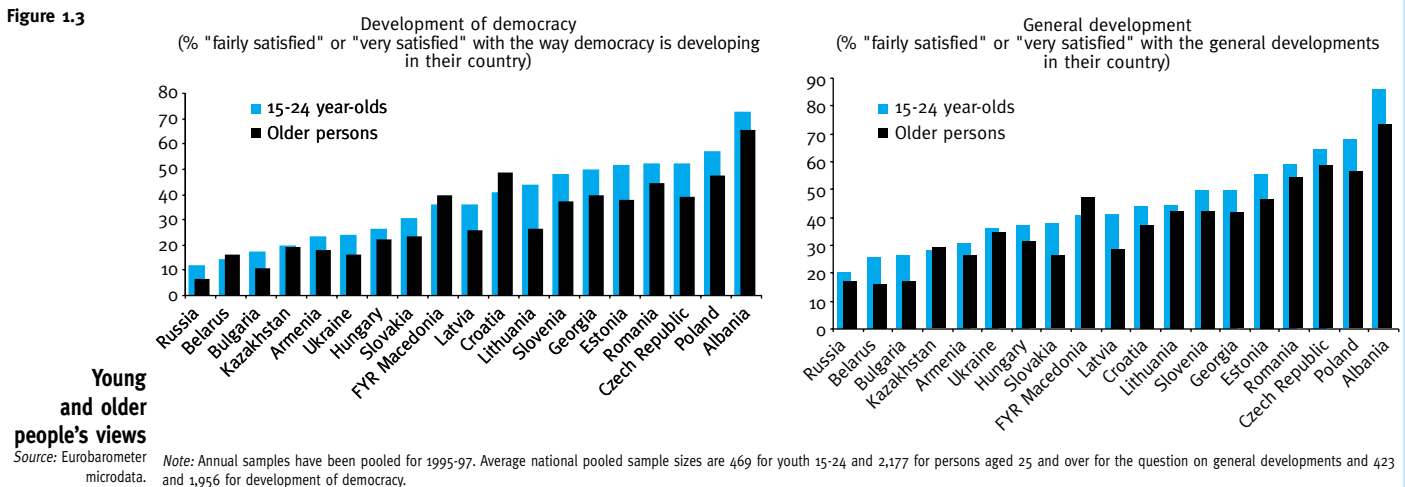
Young people's views of change

How do young people in the transition region view the changes occurring in their countries? Figure 1.3 reports results from opinion polls organized on behalf of the European Union in 19 countries in the region during 1995-97. Information was collected from representative samples of the population on a variety of topics. The diagram shows the answers of youth and of older people (all persons aged 25 and over) to two questions: how "democracy is developing" and about "developments in general" in the respondent's country.

How these aspects of the transition are viewed appears to vary sharply across the region. Less than one in 10 persons in Russia appeared satisfied with the way democracy was developing in their country compared to nearly 50 percent or more in Poland and other

countries. Some of the percentages seem surprisingly low and, in one or two cases, high. However, the differences among countries need to be treated with caution because there are no doubt differences in the way the questions translate into national languages (for example, the meaning of "fairly satisfied").

The differences among age groups within each country should not suffer from this problem. The diagrams show that young people typically have a more favourable view: on average youth satisfaction with both democracy and general developments is ahead by over six percentage points. The more optimistic view taken by young people should be seen as a positive force for change.



even those at the highest level of economic development. However, a small part of the deaths among the transition generation reflects increases in mortality which, as earlier Regional Monitoring Reports have underlined, have been one of the unexpected companions of the transition. (Life expectancy at birth deteriorated at some point during the 1990s in 22 of 23 countries for which time series are available, although in many cases it then recovered.) The lives of many young men, in particular, have been claimed by violence and armed conflicts, a heavy cost associated with changing the political map in areas of the region.

A sizeable portion of the transition generation appears to have moved out of the region – another one million young people. It should be noted that this number, the total of the last column in Table 1.2, is calculated as a residual by subtracting deaths from the total size of the generation (which itself may be measured less well in 1999 than in 1989 due to the length of time since the last population census in many countries). Nevertheless, the pattern of numbers appears to make sense.

With increased freedom and mobility among people, greater international migration has been an expected outcome of the transition. Often this is a positive choice on the part of individuals to take advantage of new opportunities, including study and work abroad.

"The most important thing is to decide to be successful and then to do everything to make this happen – get an education, study visit abroad," said Kamila, 23, in an interview for this Report in the Czech Republic.

However, for some young people leaving the country is an alternative to study.

"[I]t's not worth spending time studying," said Gheorghe, 19, in the focus-group discussion in Romania, "after all, all we want is money. . . . I'm going to go abroad." Often, young people are victims of human trafficking, associated with illegal work and the sex trade. Still others are displaced or refugee populations, a large share of which are children and young people.

Many young people have migrated among countries within the region. As the table makes clear, in most coun-

tries more young people have left than have arrived; only five countries show a positive balance. Russia has absorbed most of a large-scale movement of people back to Slavic countries that followed the breakup of the former Soviet Union. Within the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina registered the biggest negative balance, obviously linked to the bloody war that took place in that country during 1993-95. Similarly, hundreds of thousands of people were uprooted during the hostilities in Croatia in 1992-95. Since the data refer to early 1999, the impact of the fighting in Kosovo, which took place later in the year and which caused the additional movement of thousands of people, is not shown in the figures for FR Yugoslavia.

It would be revealing to follow through on other aspects of what happened to the transition generation through data over time. Unfortunately, for reasons of data availability, the statistical analysis in the Report is largely confined to a comparison of the situation of those who were 15-24 year-olds in the late 1990s with the generation who were that age in the late 1980s or early 90s. Taking the region as a whole, this "current" youth population has grown by about 10 percent since 1989, as Figure 1.4 indicates.

The economy, education and the labour market

The overall impact of the transition on the economic capacity of nations in the region is illustrated by the large changes in the most basic economic indicator – national income. To understand the changes in GDP and the realities in which young people have grown up, it is also important to look at the institutional reforms that have been a fundamental part of the economic changes. As Box 1.4 makes clear, the degree to which national income has been affected and to which economies have been marketized has ranged widely among the transition countries. The result has been a sharp increase in diversity across the region.

Economic reforms often demand sacrifice in the short term, but are intended to create new opportunities and growth in the longer term. Many of the benefits should therefore work for the future advantage of younger generations. Moreover, the market-oriented transition in the region is not just about stabilization and economic restructuring. It cancels a world in which older generations grew up. As Irina, aged 17 from Latvia, put it in one of the Report's focus-group discussions: "Their experience dates back to the previous life. . . . It is very difficult for them to find a place in this new life."

Although radical change may clear the way for the new generation, its effects are not necessarily always positive for youth: members of the older generation are also parents

Table 1.2
Accounting for a generation: children in 1989 and youth in 1999
(1,000s)

	5-14 population, 1 January 1989	15-24 population, 1 January 1999	Deaths, 1989-98	Net external migration
Czech Republic	1,653	1,643	7	-3
Slovakia	935	928	4	-3
Poland	6,527	6,456	29	-43
Hungary	1,581	1,568	6	-7
Slovenia	296	293	1	-1
Croatia	660	645	3	-12
FYR Macedonia	338	330	1	-7
Bosnia-Herzegovina	740	530	19	-191
FR Yugoslavia	1,641	1,605	6	-30
Albania	677	608	4	-65
Bulgaria	1,298	1,214	7	-77
Romania	3,765	3,727	22	-16
Estonia	227	209	2	-16
Latvia	363	338	3	-22
Lithuania	537	525	4	-8
Belarus	1,518	1,535	10	28
Moldova	772	637	5	-130
Russia	21,953	22,162	224	433
Ukraine	7,311	7,314	55	58
Armenia	663	665	3	5
Azerbaijan	1,439	1,369	11	-58
Georgia	873	836	3	-34
Kazakhstan	3,281	2,679	29	-573
Kyrgyzstan	976	899	7	-70
Tajikistan	1,286	1,208	11	-66
Turkmenistan	871	926	8	63
Uzbekistan	4,840	4,696	35	-109
Total	67,019	65,545	519	-954

Source: MONEE project database.

Note: Number of deaths estimated based on data on deaths by 5-year age groups. (Five-year age group deaths in Bosnia-Herzegovina for 1992-98, Albania for 1997-98, Georgia 1993, and Tajikistan 1996-98 are also estimates.) Net external migration was obtained as a residual between the number of population and the number of deaths over the period.

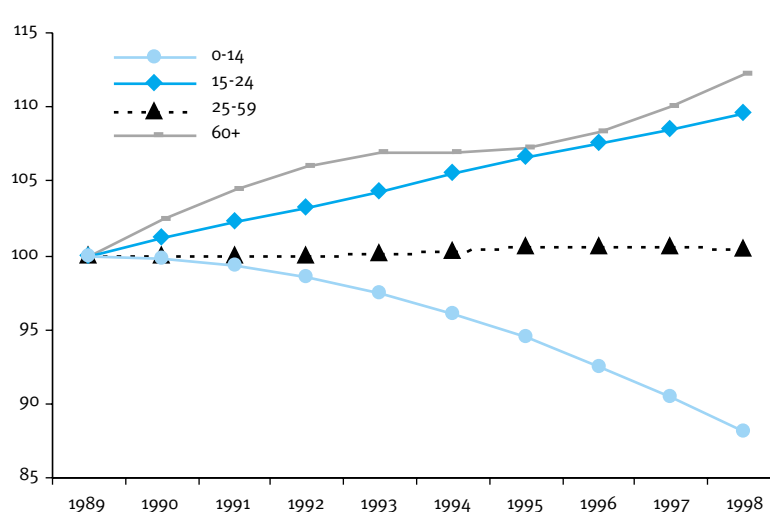


Figure 1.4

Population by age group, 1989-98

(1989=100)

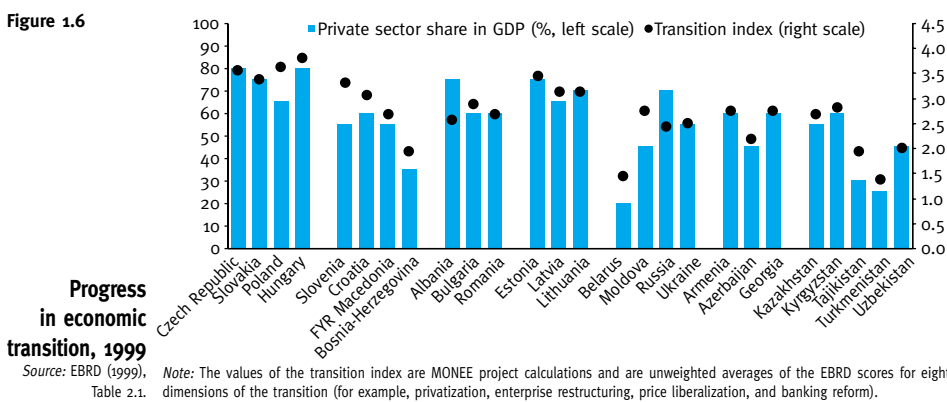
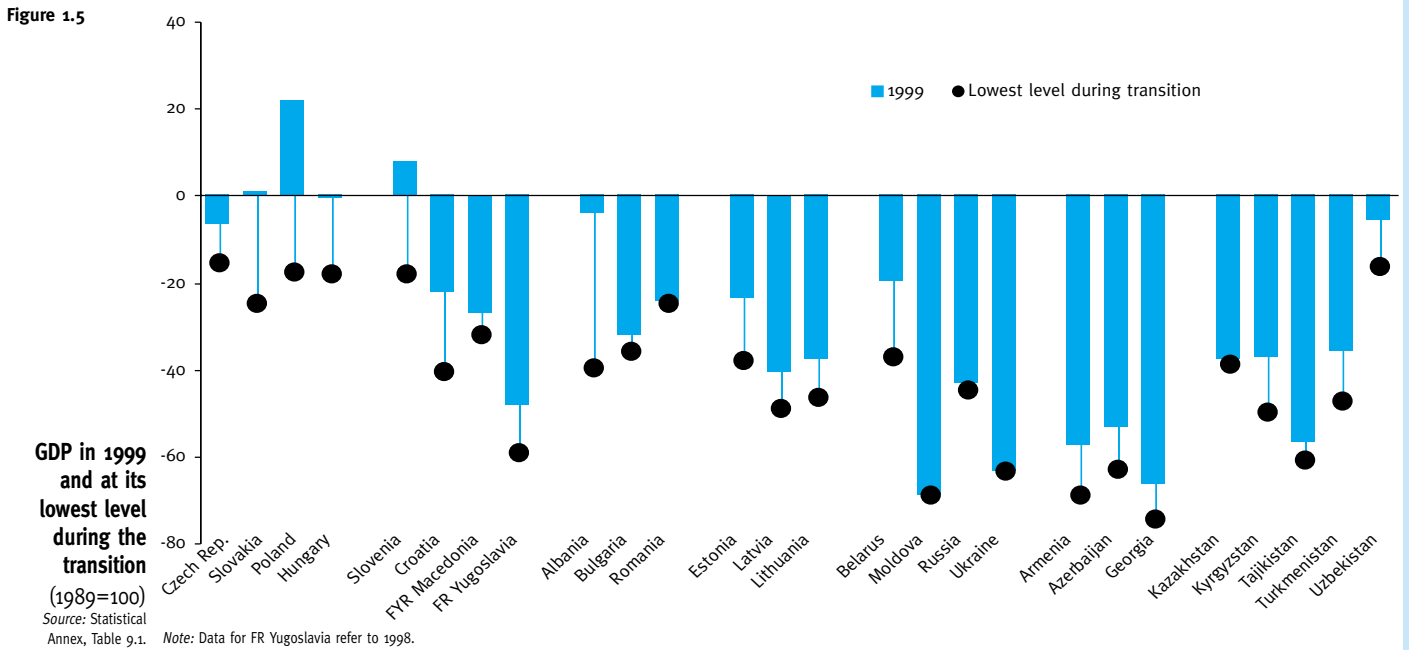
Sources: MONEE project database; US Census Bureau (1999) for Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania.

Note: 1998 data for FR Yugoslavia and Kazakhstan are MONEE project estimates.

Economic transition: GDP and institutional change

Figure 1.5 describes the cumulative changes in real GDP since 1989 using official data on measured output. The diagram illustrates both the large falls that took place after 1989 and the current status of economic recovery. The large black dots below the horizontal axis indicate the maximum extent of economic contraction. They show that all the countries underwent a considerable regression in measured output, ranging from 15 percent in the Czech Republic to 75 percent in Georgia.

economy and may therefore overestimate the extent of the contraction in total GDP given the growth in informal activity. (Estimates of the size of the informal economy in 1995 ranged from 7 percent of GDP in Uzbekistan to 61 percent in Azerbaijan, with Hungary, FR Yugoslavia, Russia, and several other countries at around 30-40 percent.) The growth of the informal sector can be considered one part of the region's "institutional change", broadly defined. It has reflected,



among other things, the coping strategies of households facing the collapse of formal structures. However, the effect on household welfare has not necessarily been positive. For example, informal employment provides no access to social security entitlements, has no limits on working hours, is free of safety and other protective regulations, and at times is associated with illegal activities. Nor, by definition, does it yield tax revenue that the state can devote to spending on "public goods".

Institutional change in the transition context is more commonly associated in most people's minds with private sector growth and marketization. Figure 1.6 measures the estimated share of the private sector in GDP, as well as a score which is a composite average of indicators developed by the EBRD to measure economic transition. (A score greater than 4 indicates full marketization.)

The blue columns indicate the current status of economic recovery – how much GDP in 1999 fell short of or exceeded its level 10 years earlier. By this time, growth had brought national income above pre-transition levels only in the economies of Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia; most countries still fell short of 1989 levels, and many fell a long way short. Still, 1999 was a landmark year when economic recession finally bottomed out in the region as a whole: economic growth was 2 percent on average in 1999, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), with a rate of 3.6 percent forecast for 2000 (estimates do not include FR Yugoslavia).

According to these estimates, the share of the private sector in GDP has reached 70 percent or more in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, and Russia, while, at the other end of the range, it rests below 40 percent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Belarus, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Central European and Baltic countries score the highest in institutional reforms. Overall, the chart confirms the link between private-sector development and market-oriented reforms.

The data in Figure 1.5 measure changes in the formal

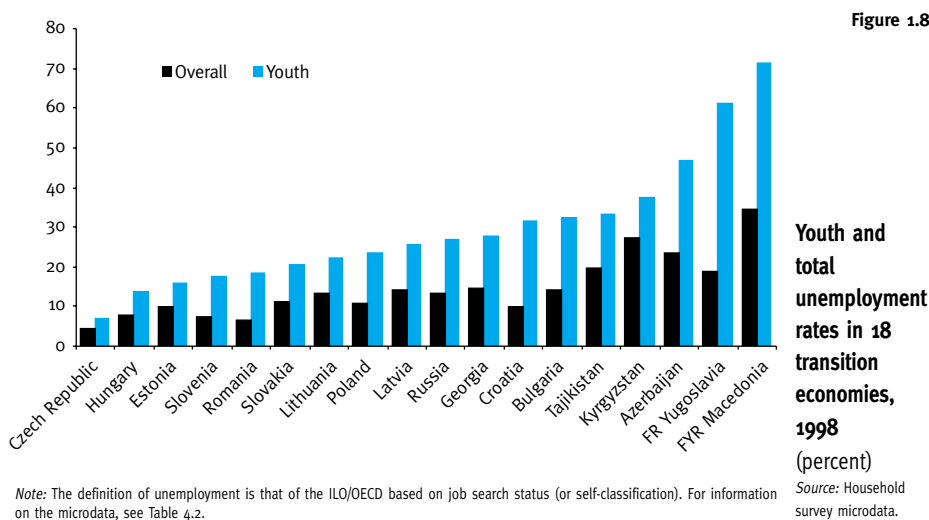
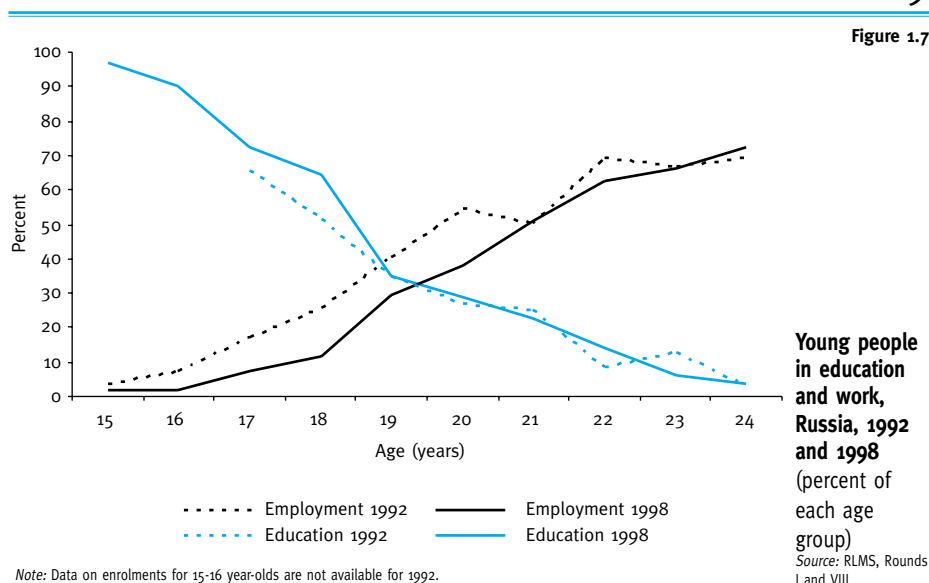
of today's young people and the breadwinners of families in which these young people are growing up. Recession makes it hard for youth leaving school to enter the labour market and may also affect the quality of the schooling and training they receive, with negative consequences for their labour market prospects. Finally, deep and long-lasting economic decay could lead to situations where all generations lose in absolute terms.

How have these immense changes affected the transition generation? They have undoubtedly affected the numbers of young people staying on in full-time education and young people's entry into the world of work. Figure 1.7 illustrates the shift between school and work with survey data from 1992 and 1998 for the largest transition country, Russia, showing the percentages of youth at each age, 15 to 24, who are in full-time education or in employment. (Ideally one would have data for 1989 for the first year, rather than 1992, but the survey in question was not in operation at that time.)

The diagram shows that at age 15, almost all young Russians were still in school in 1998. By age 18, one-third were no longer in full-time education, and, by age 19, almost two-thirds were out of school, with enrolment dropping to one in 20 by age 23-24. Conversely, the share of young people with jobs increases with age: among 18 year-olds, about one in 10 was employed in 1998, and this was true of as many as 72 percent of 24 year-olds. The great majority of young Russians in their early 20s, therefore, do have jobs of some sort. The graph clearly shows that six years earlier, in 1992, already in the period of reform, the percentages of teenagers in education were slightly lower, and the percentages in work were significantly higher up to age 20.

Some young people, however, are neither in work, nor in education. Even at age 15 the percentages shown in the graph do not quite add up to 100, and at older ages the deficit is much greater, peaking at around age 20. In 1998, one-third of Russians aged 19-20 and a quarter of those aged 23-24 were either unemployed, or were outside the labour force for some reason other than education. For young men, the numbers were broadly similar in both groups, while, for young women, unemployment accounted for the minority – about one young woman in five aged 19 and over was neither in the labour force, nor in education.

Unemployment was virtually non-existent in most countries in the region before the transition. Figure 1.8



shows the unemployment rate for 15-24 year-olds in 1998 for 18 countries, together with the rate for all persons. (These figures show the number of unemployed as a percentage of those working or unemployed; those outside the labour force are excluded from the calculation.) The graph makes clear that unemployment is particularly severe among young people in the region, the youth unemployment rate exceeding 20 percent in 13 countries and 30 percent in seven and always exceeding the overall rate by a substantial margin.

The transition from childhood to adulthood involves much more than completing one's education and trying to find work. The other significant bridge to be crossed is the one that leads to household and family formation. Decisions and experiences related to education, work, partnerships, and family all interact and, taken together, fill up much of a young person's life. The next section looks at how the transition has affected young people and family formation.

1.2 Youth Decisions on Family Formation

Family formation for young people involves three big decisions: when to leave the parental home, whether and when to partner with another person, possibly involving marriage, and whether and when to have children. All three decisions are fundamental steps in the transition from childhood to adulthood, and they are often closely linked. Marriage and childbearing are widely regarded as a declaration of adulthood by the individual and the recognition of that status by society. What happened to this social contract during the transition years of the 1990s?

Under communism the support and control of the state during this crucial phase of life were strong and firmly imposed. For example, marriage increased the chances of securing housing, though housing shortages meant many young married couples lived with one partner's parents. Moreover, decisions on education and work are also often linked to those on family formation. One strategy for coping with the financial hardship of unemployment may well be to stay living with one's parents. Despite these links, for practical reasons the analysis in this section looks at each of the three areas of family formation on their own.

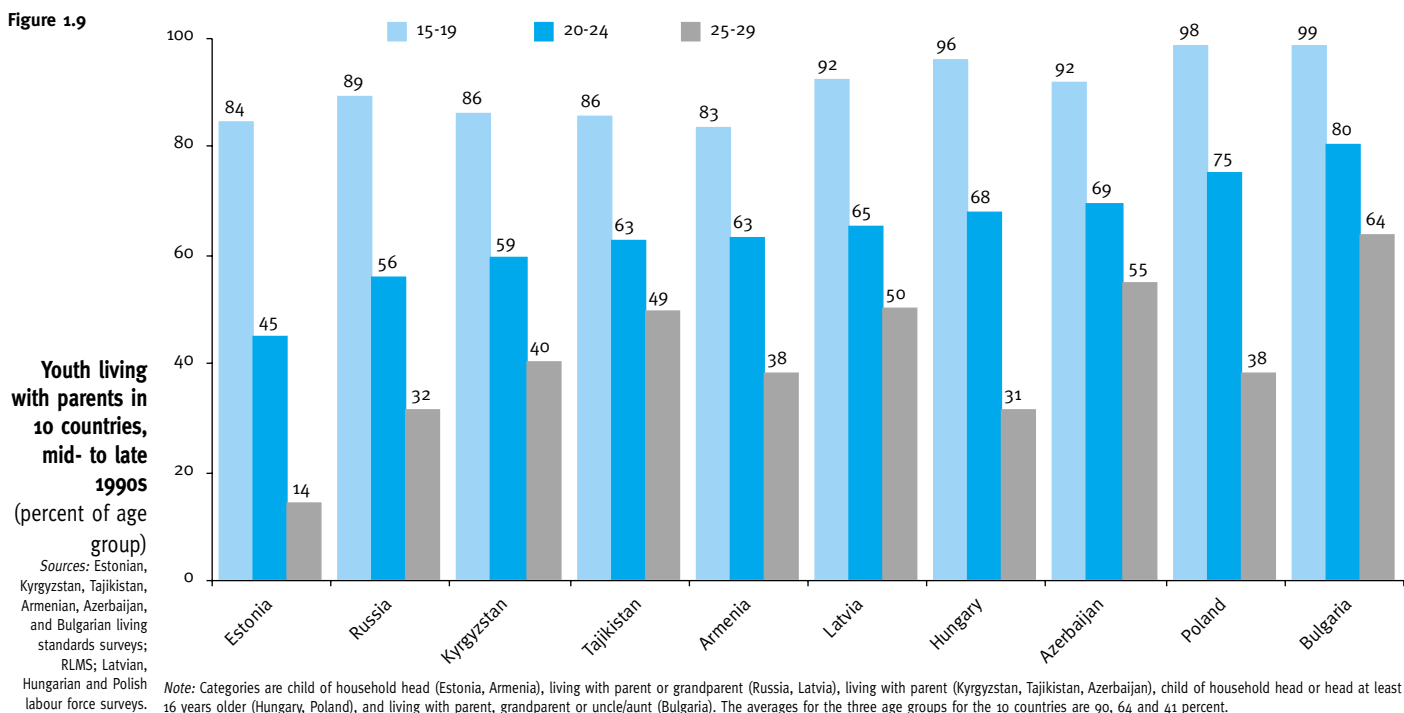
Leaving home

The great majority of 15-19 year-olds in the region still live in the parental home. For the 10 countries for which the MONEE project has data (which include examples from six of the project's seven subregions), at least five in every six young people of this age are still in the parental home, and, on average, nine in every 10, as Figure 1.9 shows. (The true figures may be higher since the definition of "parental

home" in the countries with the lowest rates is quite restrictive.) Among 20-24 year-olds, the figure is much lower, but the average is still almost two-thirds (64 percent). In only one country, Estonia, is it less than half, while in Bulgaria four of every five youth of this age are still living with their parents (or other close relatives). Even among those people aged 25-29, the proportion still at home is around half or more in four countries.

These data, like some others in this chapter, underline the transitory nature of the years between the ages of 15 and 24. Many young people leave the parental home as they move through this stage of life, but many also stay. The numbers staying presumably reflect a mix of cultural and economic factors which differ among the countries. The variation, it should be noted, does not seem out of line with that in other industrialized nations. For example, among European Union countries the proportion of 20-24 year-olds still in the parental home in 1995 ranged from 29 percent in Finland to 87 percent in Italy and 89 percent in Spain, with the average for 13 member states at 64 percent, the same as the average for the transition countries in Figure 1.9. The data for Spain and Italy reflect not only high youth unemployment rates, but a strong family tradition, both factors that also vary among the transition countries.

Are more young people still living with their parents now than at the end of the 1980s? The MONEE project does not have the necessary data to answer this question, but it is likely that the answer is "yes". Nearly the same share of young people in the region as a whole are remaining in education. But the emergence of high rates of youth



unemployment shown in Figure 1.8 are likely to have delayed young people's departure from the parental home.

Less marriage and more cohabitation: a longer transition?

Earlier Regional Monitoring Reports have noted that marriage and fertility rates turned sharply downward in the early 1990s. This trend has, in fact, been one of the most uniform and consistent social changes during the transition, and, as shown below, it is largely the decisions of young people that have been driving this change.

Before the transition, people in the region tended to marry young and have their first child at an early age. Marriage was a popular institution among youth, partly because the state offered incentives such as better access to housing, in-kind services and cash benefits. Moreover, divorce was typically very straightforward, so marriage was not necessarily seen as a binding tie. The average age of first marriage for women was lowest in the Czech half of former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Ukraine (21-21.5 years), and in these countries the ratios of divorces to marriages in any year (the "general divorce rate") were also among the highest in the region. Only in Georgia was the average age of first marriage above 24 years. The age difference between brides and grooms was around two years in Central Europe, the Baltic States and western CIS, a small gender gap by international standards, while it was around four years along the southern belt of the region.

The 1990s saw an enormous plunge in marriage rates among 16-24 year-olds, something that has apparently occurred right across the region. Figure 1.10 shows the changes for young women in the 20 countries for which data are available for both 1989 and 1998. On average, marriage rates halved. In Estonia and Latvia they declined by two-thirds. Even in Uzbekistan and in Belarus

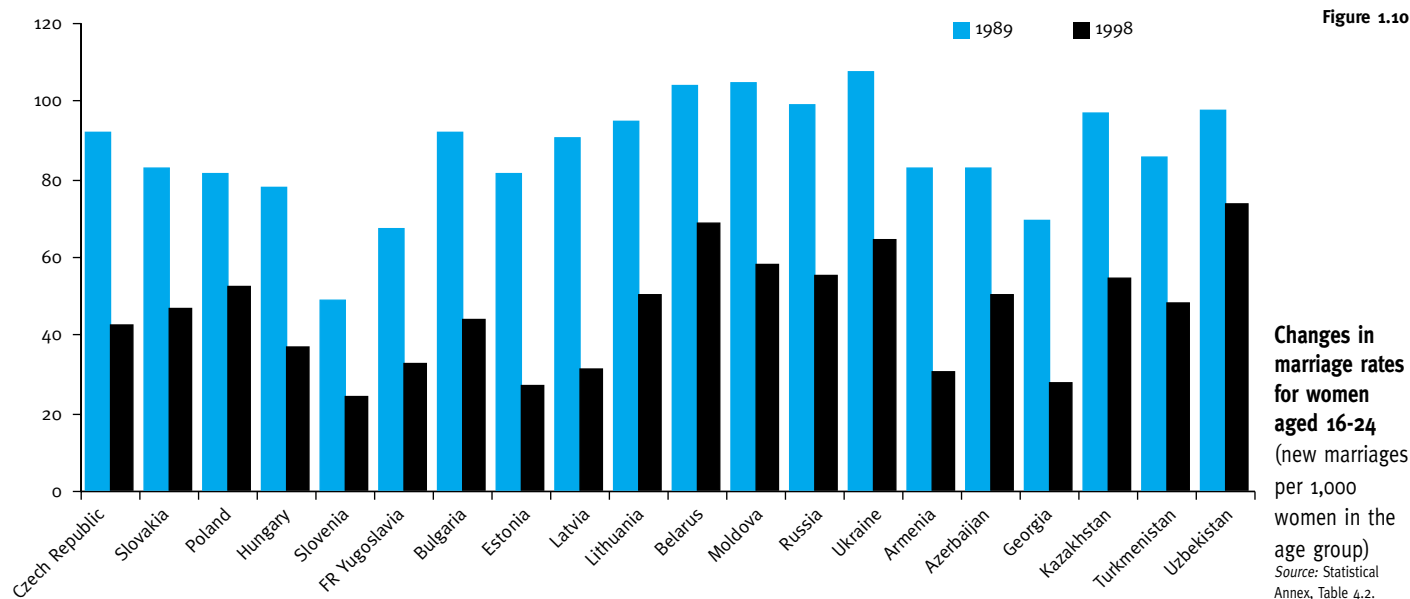
Table 1.3
Marriages: all women and women aged under 25

	Total marriages (absolute number)		Marriages to women under 25 (absolute number)		Change among young women over total change (%)
	1998	Change, 1998-1989	1998	Change, 1998-1989	
Czech Republic	55,027	-26,235	31,897	-26,359	100.5
Slovakia	27,494	-9,031	19,312	-9,114	100.9
Poland	204,850	-50,793	144,087	-39,032	76.8
Hungary	44,915	-22,034	25,989	-21,597	98.0
Slovenia	7,528	-2,248	3,085	-3,370	149.9
FR Yugoslavia	42,956	-26,482	22,950	-21,952	82.9
Bulgaria	35,582	-27,681	23,677	-24,889	89.9
Estonia	5,430	-7,214	2,438	-5,094	70.6
Latvia	9,641	-14,855	4,571	-10,024	67.5
Lithuania	18,486	-16,144	11,761	-11,213	69.5
Belarus	71,354	-26,575	46,272	-19,866	74.8
Moldova	21,814	-18,114	15,974	-12,980	71.7
Russia	848,691	-471,237	530,381	-321,129	68.1
Ukraine	310,504	-178,826	205,458	-124,195	69.5
Armenia	11,365	-15,892	8,784	-11,677	73.5
Azerbaijan	40,856	-31,018	29,436	-21,416	69.0
Georgia	15,343	-22,945	10,110	-15,129	65.9
Kazakhstan	96,048	-68,748	66,218	-48,799	71.0
Turkmenistan	26,361	-8,529	19,272	-7,048	82.6
Uzbekistan	170,525	-30,156	149,808	-19,379	64.3

Source: MONEE project database.

Note: The data show new marriages occurring in each year. First year is 1990 for Russia. Last year is 1997 for Poland and 1995 for Tajikistan.

and Poland, where the changes were smallest, they dropped by one-quarter and one-third, respectively. Table 1.3 shows the decrease in the total number of marriages between the two years and the amount of that change accounted for by falling marriage rates among young



Note: The first year for Russia is 1990. The last year for Poland is 1997.

women aged 16-24. The data show clearly that it is mainly the decisions of young people that have resulted in the huge downswing in marriage since 1989.

What is behind these huge declines? The falling marriage rate may reflect a number of factors. It may involve positive choices among those young people who are able to pursue education or employment opportunities. Others may be benefiting from a social climate that is more tolerant of cohabitation, although this presumably varies greatly across the region. On the other hand, the lower marriage rate may reflect a lack of access to jobs, income, or housing that makes it hard for marriage plans to materialize, while at the same time there may be little change in attitudes towards cohabitation outside of wedlock.

Changes in the age of first marriage may throw light on which scenario is closer to reality. Data presented in Table 1.4 show that the average age at first marriage for women in 1998 was higher in 16 of the 23 countries for which data are available over time. The rise in the age

at first marriage has been significant in countries in the western parts of the region. However, it is striking that in many CIS countries, despite a big fall in youth marriage rates (similar to that seen in Central and Eastern Europe), the average age of marriage has not changed much (or in several cases has even declined), suggesting that there has been little change in marriage patterns among those who can afford marriage.

In some countries lower marriage rates may also reflect new social values, with young people choosing to remain single or to form partnerships outside of marriage. These decisions, as will be seen later, can also contribute to postponements of first childbirth and to changes in the numbers of children

Views on sexual health and support

Despite a pressing need for information and education about sexual and reproductive health, young people still often have a tough time talking about sex, especially with parents and other adults. Youth in the transition region are no different, as these voices from focus-group research carried out for this Report in Romania, Russia and Uzbekistan illustrate.

- "I prefer not to talk about this." (Tuca, 22)
- "When my mother says something, she imposes it, and at our age, if something is imposed on you, you object as much as you can." (Natalia, 15)
- "Some parents have antiquated views about sexuality." (Dorinel, 22)
- "Some girls are too embarrassed to tell their mothers, and they turn to their girl friends if they feel ill. . . ." (Nilufar, 19)
- "I could never talk to my mother about such a thing. I'd rather take advice from a good friend." (Diana, 17)
- "My mother is my psychologist." (Elena, 19)
- "At our age, it is normal that parents do not understand us." (Petre, 24)
- "I do not know about those who are 15-16 now, but I have never received any type of information or counselling on this matter. All the information I have, I get from my friends or the mass media." (Ksenia, 22, infected with gonorrhoea)
- "They should give more information on healthy life styles and produce proper publicity." (Tatiana, 22)

born outside marriage. For many young people, this means spending more years being sexually active outside marriage. For some, this may mean more partners, with the attendant risks of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. For others, particularly in social and cultural environments restrictive to sex outside marriage, it means more years of sexual abstinence. There is some evidence from parts of the region suggesting that, while young people are marrying later, some may be becoming sexually active earlier, as Box 1.5 presents.

Sexual behaviour and reproductive health are sensitive issues for youth and adults alike – issues fraught with social taboos and personal inhibitions. Voices of Youth 2 illustrates how difficult it can be for young people to talk about sexual and reproductive health with their parents, other adults and even their peers.

Teenage fertility and pregnancy

In line with the pattern of early marriages, women started childbearing at relatively young ages before the transition. Births to teenage mothers were socially accepted, but most occurred within marriage. Still, a significant share of pregnancies among teens and young women ended up in abortion or the placement of a child in public care, for which the rates have been high in the region, as earlier Regional Monitoring Reports have shown. With marriage sharply

Table 1.4

Average age of women at first marriage, 1989 and 1998

	1989	1998	Difference (1998-1989)
Czech Republic	21.2	23.6	2.4
Poland	21.7	23.1	1.4
Hungary	21.4	23.8	2.4
Slovenia	23.5	25.6	2.1
Croatia	23.5	25.2	1.7
FYR Macedonia	22.6	23.2	0.6
FR Yugoslavia	23.2	24.6	1.4
Bulgaria	21.5	23.5	2.0
Romania	22.1	23.2	1.1
Estonia	22.5	24.3	1.9
Latvia	22.2	24.0	1.8
Lithuania	22.2	22.7	0.5
Belarus	22.3	22.1	-0.2
Moldova	22.0	22.0	0.0
Russia	22.9	22.7	-0.2
Armenia	22.3	22.4	0.1
Azerbaijan	22.8	22.6	-0.2
Georgia	24.5	24.1	-0.4
Kazakhstan	22.4	23.3	0.9
Kyrgyzstan	21.9	22.0	0.1
Tajikistan	21.5	21.1	-0.4
Turkmenistan	22.6	23.0	0.4
Uzbekistan	22.3	21.0	-1.3

Source: Statistical Annex, Table 4.4.

Note: The first year is 1993 for Lithuania. The second year is 1996 for Russia and 1995 for Tajikistan.

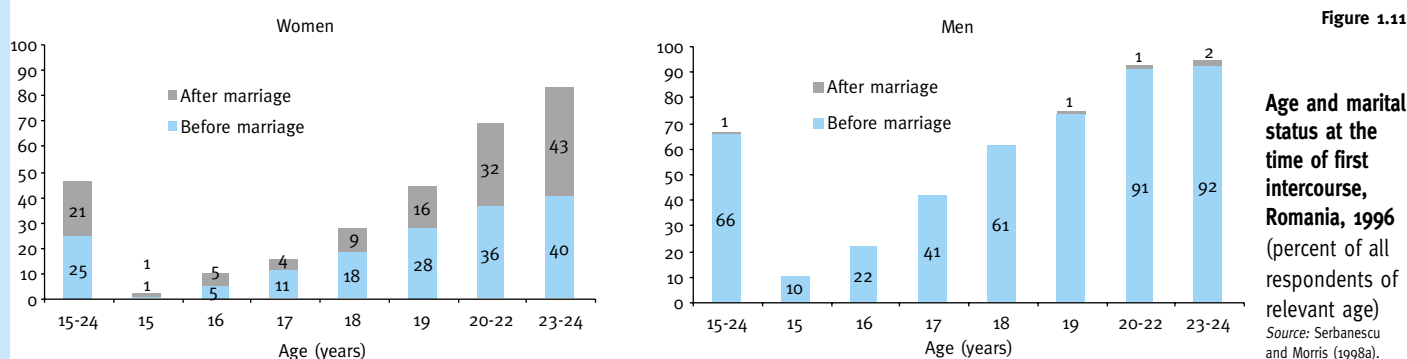
Box 1.5

Patterns of partnership formation and sexual behaviours

Were the age of sexual initiation falling among adolescents in the transition countries, this change would fit with a longer term trend in both Eastern and Western Europe. International fertility and family surveys among adults, carried out between 1988 and 1998 and including several transition countries, have found a decline in the age of sexual initiation. In Poland, Hungary, Latvia,

more adolescents have had a first sexual experience: among girls, before or after marriage, for boys, almost exclusively before.

A 1997-98 "narrative" survey carried out in Romania, in which young participants projected their own experiences on to imaginary couples, found that, among 18-19 year-olds, 24 percent of girls and 53 per-



and Lithuania, women aged 25-29 reported having had their first sexual intercourse on average almost one year earlier than did women aged 40-44. The median age ranged from 18.4 in Hungary to 20.6 in Poland, that is, the number of respondents having their first sexual intercourse below this age equaled the number having their first intercourse above it.

Figure 1.11 shows the findings of a 1996 survey in Romania concerning the share of women and men aged 15-24 reporting sexual experience. As age increases,

cent of boys had had sex by the age of 17. These figures are far higher than in the more conventional data from the 1996 survey shown in Figure 1.11. Older participants, aged 20-24, projected consistently lower rates of sexual activity at age 17 than did those aged 18-19, suggesting that the age of first sexual activity is falling. Sexual activity at a very young age boosts the probability of multiple sexual partners and the attendant risks of sexually transmitted disease and unplanned pregnancy.

down in the 1990s, what has happened to teenage fertility and pregnancy?

Pregnancy and childbirth among adolescents are not necessarily unhappy events, as eloquently expressed by two young mothers in the focus-group research for this Report.

"My values have changed in many ways, after giving birth to my son," says Lessi, 21, of Ukraine. "I decided to enter university, and I have. I am growing together with my son. I have a lot to learn from him. I have changed a lot, thanks to my son. My life plans have changed, I need to think of his education, his future . . . these values are different. I do not think only for myself any more."

Or as Cristina, 21, of Romania, declares: "The children motivate us to fight: to get a better job, to build a house, to create better conditions."

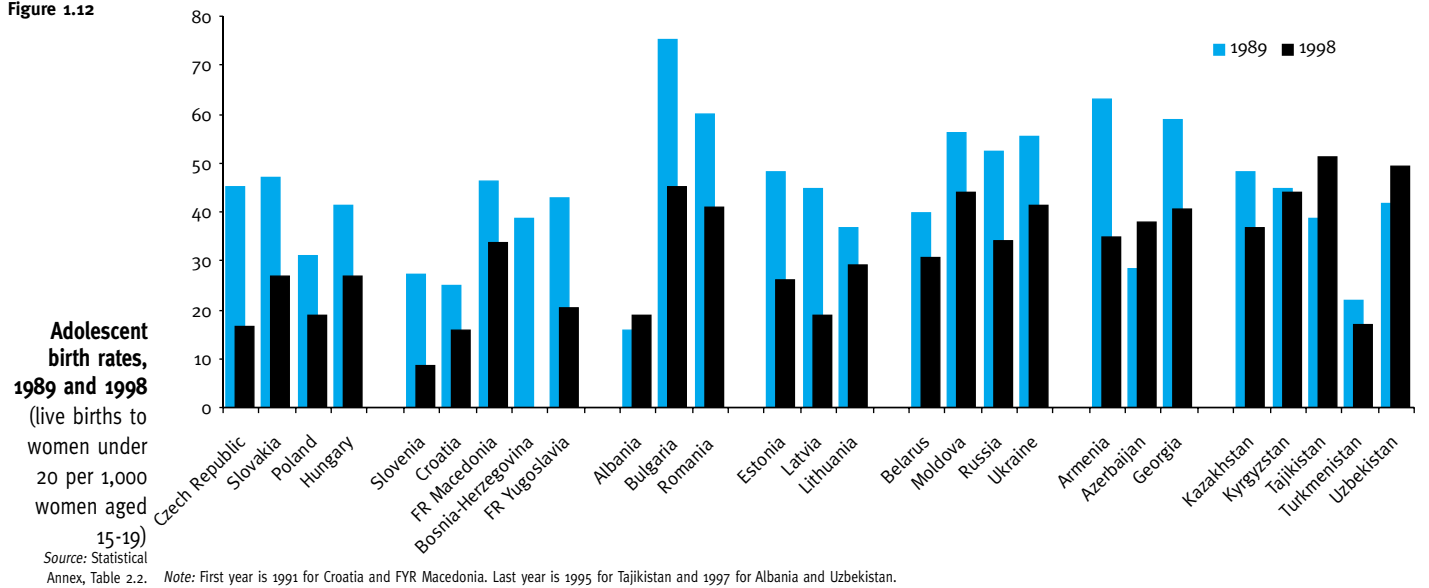
However, it is also well established by research in many industrialized countries that early childbirth, especially where partner and family support may be limited, inhibits a young women's ability to acquire and progress through education and employment, with lifelong implications for earnings.

"A child limits the possibility of getting education and finding a job," said Luda, 20, a young Ukrainian mother, in one of the Report's focus groups, although she went on to state that, in her opinion, "if you are well motivated, you will manage somehow."

Figure 1.12 shows teen birth rates in the region for 1989 and 1998. It is striking how high the rate was across the region at the end of the 1980s: on average about 45 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19, compared to an average of 12 for the European Union countries in 1995. Only Albania, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan had rates that came close to even the highest found in the EU (20 births per 1,000 in Portugal and 29 in the UK). In most countries, there was a rise in teenage fertility a few years into transition. In Tajikistan, as the figure shows, the latest data available are from 1995, and the rate at that time was considerably higher than it had been in 1989.

It is also clear from the graph that by 1998, teen birth rates had fallen across the region and that the fall was often substantial, leaving only eight countries with rates over 40

Figure 1.12



births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. The current regional average is about 30 births per 1,000.

The overall decline in teen births should be seen as good news. However, it needs to be placed against a backdrop of significantly declining fertility during the transition: the number of births per 1,000 for all women aged 15-49 decreased from 78 in 1990 to 48 in 1998. It is also unclear whether and how much the drop in teen births is linked to positive changes in female education and employment patterns during the transition and whether the trend will endure.

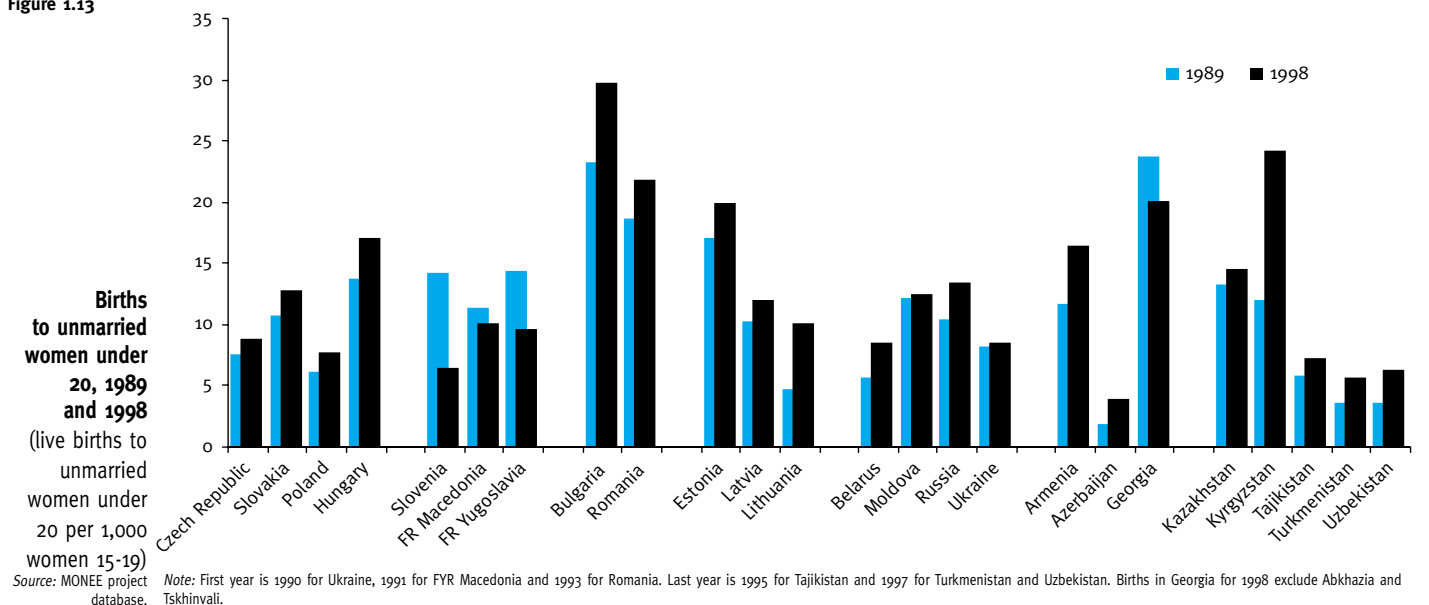
Moreover, the general fall in birth rates for those aged under 20 hides some important shifts within the 15-19 age group. In Russia, for example, despite a slight reduction in their population, girls aged 16 and under gave birth to 2,600 more children in 1998 than in 1989, an increase of

20 percent. Girls aged 17 or under also gave birth to more children in Belarus, Ukraine and all the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Figure 1.13 further qualifies the overall picture by highlighting a marked trend in the region: the rises in births outside marriage. Before the transition, most teen births were occurring within marriage, though studies in Russia and the Czech Republic showed that the majority of newborns had been conceived before the marriages took place. The graph shows that, while overall teen fertility rates declined between 1989 and 1998, births to unwed teenage mothers increased in 20 of 24 countries. In other words, marriages in these countries have fallen more rapidly than births.

Births outside marriage accounted for three of every four teenage births in Slovenia and Estonia in

Figure 1.13



1998 and for half or more of the births in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. (In the region as a whole, on average, 43 percent of teenage births were to unmarried girls in 1998 compared to 23 percent in 1989.) As studies have pointed out, cohabitation is clearly a factor in many countries, but accounts for only a part of these births. In Russia, for example, half of all the births outside marriage are registered only to one parent; in Slovenia in 1996, less than one-third of all births outside marriage involved cohabitation.

Demographic change, child and youth cohorts

The decisions young people make about family formation have impacts on children, who will eventually replace the current youth cohorts. Even though fertility rates have fallen, these links remain very important. The share of births to young mothers stayed high throughout the 1990s; in both 1989 and 1998 about half of all births occurred among women aged 24 or less.

The decision to postpone having children, which many young people are now making in the region, may be well founded and may even promote the welfare of the children these persons will eventually raise. However, because these youth decisions are occurring in parallel with similar decisions by older adults, they are contributing to the accelerating decline in the size of the child population shown in Figure 1.4. Between 1989 and 1998, the total fertility rate shrank by a third or more in most countries, including Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan; it dropped by around an eighth in Croatia, a fourth in Kyrgyzstan and a half in Latvia and Armenia.

The sharp decrease in the number of children being born – an unexpected outcome of the transition – leads to questions about the future size of youth cohorts. This is an issue for society and also for young people, because changes in youth populations have implications for the access to services, jobs and social benefits and, in general, for youth-related policies. Will the transition countries have much smaller youth populations within 10 or 15 years?

Part of the knowledge necessary to answer this question – the information on child cohorts – is shown in Table 1.5. The table compares the population numbers for 15-24 year-olds (youth) and for 5-14 year-olds, as well as for the 0-9 year-olds who within the next 10 to 15 years will replace the current youth population.

The table suggests that, overall, during the next 10 years the youth nation of the region will remain as strong as it is now, but that countries in various parts of the region will experience different trends. For example, Central European countries will have, on average, about 15 percent

Child and youth cohorts, 1 January 1999

Table 1.5

	Youth, 15-24 (1,000s)	Children, 5-14 (1,000s)	Children, 0-9 (1,000s)	Children, 5-14 (as % of youth)	Children, 0-9 (as % of youth)
Czech Republic	1,643.3	1,279.7	1,095.2	77.9	66.6
Slovakia	928.4	800.3	679.9	86.2	73.2
Poland	6,456.2	5,737.0	4,738.6	88.9	73.4
Hungary	1,568.1	1,220.0	1,129.2	77.8	72.0
Slovenia	293.2	235.0	200.8	80.1	68.5
Croatia	645.0	547.9	501.9	84.9	77.8
FYR Macedonia	330.1	317.2	307.8	96.1	93.2
Bosnia-Herzegovina	529.7	457.8	335.7	86.4	63.4
FR Yugoslavia	1,604.9	1,502.8	1,390.3	93.6	86.6
Albania	607.8	753.2	729.6	123.9	120.0
Bulgaria	1,213.7	992.8	806.0	81.8	66.4
Romania	3,726.6	3,103.7	2,537.6	83.3	68.1
Estonia	209.1	204.2	157.3	97.7	75.2
Latvia	337.5	351.2	259.2	104.1	76.8
Lithuania	524.9	557.7	460.1	106.2	87.7
Belarus	1,535.2	1,521.8	1,163.9	99.1	75.8
Moldova	637.3	671.1	533.4	105.3	83.7
Russia	22,162.4	21,200.8	15,617.0	95.7	70.5
Ukraine	7,313.9	6,933.8	5,405.1	94.8	73.9
Armenia	664.6	747.6	580.1	112.5	87.3
Azerbaijan	1,369.1	1,735.2	1,774.4	126.7	129.6
Georgia	835.9	842.4	656.2	100.8	78.5
Kazakhstan	2,679.2	3,116.5	2,686.1	116.3	100.3
Kyrgyzstan	899.2	1,172.4	1,112.7	130.4	123.7
Tajikistan	1,208.5	1,753.9	1,679.0	145.1	138.9
Turkmenistan	925.6	1,255.7	1,248.2	135.7	134.9
Uzbekistan	4,695.8	6,397.4	6,312.8	136.2	134.4
Total	65,545.1	65,409.2	54,098.1	99.8	82.5

Sources: Statistical Annex, Table 1.3; MONEE project database.

fewer youth, while the Central Asian countries will possess about a third more. However, as the earlier sections make clear, the eventual size of the youth population is also influenced by mortality and migration. This implies that, as the child population becomes the future youth nation, their numbers will be trimmed across the region, from Central Europe to Central Asia.

Given the smaller size of the child cohorts born in the last 10 years (entirely during the transition), most countries will have significantly smaller youth populations over the next decade and a half. So far, there are few signs of trends that could reverse or even moderate these reductions. If the current trends hold, within the next 20 years about a third fewer youth will be living in Central Europe, while the number in Central Asia will be about the same as today.

1.3 Conclusions

The decade of the economic and social transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States has been a perilous and also a promising time for growing up. The “transition generation” were children when communism began to fall in the region; today they are teenagers and young adults. They have come of age during a period of rapid and profound change: democratic political systems have been established; economies have been marketized and privatized; national and cultural sovereignty has been asserted, sometimes with bloody consequences, and civil society has been reborn. These have been years both of hard shocks and of new opportunities.

This introductory chapter has provided some of the key economic, social and demographic background relevant to a better understanding of the life of the transition generation. The analysis finds substantial changes in the most intimate spheres of the lives of young people – the formation of households and families – with wide-ranging implications for public policies. The clearly defined patterns of the past have been replaced by greater diversity, a consequence of both changed circumstances and new choices. The trend towards fewer or later marriages and the concurrent trends revolving around the entry to employment suggest that the transition paths to adult life are becoming longer and more complex. The decisions now being made by young people have important repercussions not only for their own lives, but also for

the lives of their children, the broader society and, indeed, for the transition itself.

The chapters which follow attempt to map out five major dimensions of these youth transitions: growing up healthy, acquiring education, finding work, avoiding conflict with the law, and participating in the social and political life of the country – together, many of the key experiences, whether positive, or negative, in the lives of youth.

One aim of this Report is to call greater attention to youth as a resource; the evidence reviewed above suggests that in the future this resource is going to be more scarce. The analysis finds a contrasting trend in demographics: while the 65-million-strong youth nation is almost 10 per cent bigger now than it was in 1989, the number of children has declined. Accordingly, the youth population is going to decrease in many countries as the children born during the transition reach adolescence and young adulthood.

But it is less the sheer numbers of youth and more the health, energy, skills, and values which young individuals feel and develop that are going to make a difference. These ought to be appreciated and nurtured. Each of the following chapters will therefore attempt to gain insights into the needs of youth, as well as the policies that appear to be the most responsive to these needs in the region's changing societies. ■