

**EMBARGO UNTIL 10 JULY AT 10 A.M. CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME**

**UNICEF and World Scouting join forces to support young people  
in the countries in transition**

Prague, 10 July – Young people living in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States – the so-called transition generation – are a *generation in jeopardy*.

Enjoying far greater freedoms and a broader range of opportunities than previous generations, the region's young people are nonetheless facing major obstacles to realising their potential and contributing to the development of their rapidly-changing countries.

To help them assume their role as responsible citizens, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) today launched the **Young People in Changing Societies Discussion Guide** for use in youth workshops and roundtables that will be held throughout the region. The launch took place in the framework of the 17<sup>th</sup> European Scout Conference.

Nearly 60 million children and young people living in poverty... one million languishing in institutions... over 700,000 HIV/AIDS cases, most of them affecting youth... over 18 million young people out of school but without jobs... millions displaced or turned into refugees due to armed conflicts... trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence, crime, emigration, suicide, accidents, alcohol and drug abuse all on the rise...

*This is not the better future promised when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989.*

The new publication, written with the help of over 200 young people from Georgia, Lithuania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine, highlights the findings of an in-depth study published last year by UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre. It contains the latest data concerning young people and uses exercises and role-plays on issues ranging from school drop-out and unemployment to prevention of HIV/AIDS and volunteering for community action projects.

"This colourful, youth-friendly publication will help young people understand and cope with two difficult transitions: their own passage from childhood to adulthood and the radical and complex changes their societies have undergone over the past decade," said Shahnaz Kianian-Firouzgar, UNICEF's Deputy Regional Director, adding: "The consolidation of stable, peaceful and democratic societies in the 27 transition countries depends on the health, well-being, values, know-how and participation of the new generation."

But according to WOSM's European Director Jocelyne Gendrin-Guinebault, the younger generation "is not receiving the information, guidance, support and protection they need in order to become responsible citizens with a stake and a voice in the betterment of their societies." She added that the Scout Movement is working in Europe to help strengthen the youth sector and promote more effective and inclusive national youth policies in all countries.

*In a recent UNICEF survey of young people in 35 countries of Europe and Central Asia, fully half said they have little or no information about such topics as human rights, sexual relations, HIV/AIDS and drugs. Over 60% felt that their views are not taken into account by governments; large numbers said that voting is not an effective way to improve things and many dream of emigrating someday to Western Europe or the United States.*

Local UNICEF offices and national Scout associations will use the Discussion Guide over the next 2-3 years to intensify youth dialogue on these and other issues, in cooperation with youth associations, non-governmental organizations, Ministries of Youth, Health and Education, among others.

The Discussion Guide is being launched as a contribution to the Global Movement for Children and the Say Yes for Children campaign being promoted worldwide by a range of partners, leading up to the United Nations Special Session on Children in September.

\*\* \*\*

For more information and interviews, contact:

Richard Amalvy, WOSM External Relations Director, Tel: 32 2 534 33 15, mobile: + 32 476 32 70 20

Robert Cohen, UNICEF Regional Communications Officer, Tel: 41 22 909 5631, mobile: 41 79 431 1537