



# Voices

## from Europe and Central Asia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDGs<sup>1</sup>



### Sustainable development in the region

- Comprising high-, middle- and low-income countries, the region of Europe and Central Asia encapsulates many of the global challenges in building inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies. It is therefore an important voice in the process to shape a development framework which is universal in scope and applicable to all countries.
- The financial and economic crisis hit the region harder than any other region of the world and resulted in setbacks in social progress, mainly through higher unemployment, lower incomes and cuts in government spending leading to weaker social protection.

*“The conventional development model with unsustainable growth at its centre is not suited to resolving today’s challenges; transforming conventional approaches to social and economic progress, and connecting the dots between them and to environmental sustainability is therefore the key issue of the time.” – Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia.*

- Inequalities in income, wealth and access to essential public services, in particular education and health, are on the rise across the region; moreover exclusion and material deprivation is a persistent reality for marginalized groups (ethnic minorities, migrants, families living in extreme poverty, particularly women and children). Gender equality remains a challenge for the region, parts of which have experienced a weakening of women’s rights in recent years.
- High-income countries of the region still have the highest rate of energy consumption per capita and middle-income countries have a highly carbonised economy, in particular through their production patterns based on intensive use of fossil energy.
- The whole region is affected by the degradation of ecosystems and the resulting loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The creation of national governance institutions, public administrations, and civil services, ensuring the provision of basic services, managing common energy and water infrastructure systems that are shared with neighbouring countries, and designing and implementing effective national (and sub-national) development strategies are still daunting challenges for many countries of the region. ■

### Messages related to focus areas for potential SDGs<sup>2</sup>

- Eradicating poverty is an overarching goal which will be reached only if its main drivers are jointly addressed, namely creating decent jobs for all, reducing gender and income inequalities and providing access for all to a wide range of public services, notably health, education, transport, energy and water. This goal is thus depending on the success of a wide range of other SDGs.
- Equality and inclusion should also be at the centre of the future development agenda. This crucial concern needs therefore to be reflected in a specific SDG and/or mainstreamed in other relevant SDGs through appropriate targets.
- Human rights, rule of law, access to justice and fighting corruption are important enablers of sustainable and inclusive development. Governance should be both a goal in itself and mainstreamed in other SDGs. In view of today’s complex and interrelated issues, the region emphasizes the need for new forms of governance characterized by an integrative, cross-sectoral approach to policy making. Moreover, dialogue and public participation is the most efficient way to restore trust between public authorities (both local and national) and their citizens. Particular attention must be paid to the full involvement of women and youth.
- Gender equality is a key driver of development. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls must be eliminated. Women’s full and equal participation in politics and decision-making and in the labour market should be ensured.

*“In my humble opinion, the inequality between women and men in a society is a direct indicator of that country’s development.” – Young woman teacher from an informal settlement in Tirana, Albania.*

- The establishment of national social protection floors is a powerful tool for ensuring human security, dignity, equity and social inclusion; experience shows that they are both feasible and affordable with an economic and social policy mix tailored to each country situation.



*“Education, health and “honest and responsive government” are top priorities for the whole region of Europe and Central Asia. Other major priorities are: protection against crime and violence and preservation of the environment for Eastern Europe; jobs and good nutrition for Central Asia; and water and protection of the environment for Western Europe.” – MY world Survey.*

- Any goal on health should advocate for a whole-of-government, whole-of-society and a life-course approach, crucial for addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and for the well-being of societies at large. Health 2020: the European policy for health and well-being, will set the ground for implementing this new vision in the region. The unfinished agenda of the MDGs, universal health coverage, non-communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health and rights should be addressed in the future development framework.
- Any goal on education should call for investing in inclusive and quality education, and life-long learning, thereby ensuring good learning outcomes for all.
- A goal on decent jobs for all should advocate for a job-rich growth strategy, with targets focused on the main drivers of such strategy (e.g. the diversification of activities and the development of promising green sectors).
- A goal on sustainable consumption and production patterns should be considered to balance human needs and planetary boundaries. It should be guided by the principle of decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. Energy and natural resource savings should be achieved both on the production side (industry and agriculture) and on the consumption side (notably food, transport, housing and public procurement).
- The promotion of innovative industries and technologies will support these changes in production and consumption patterns by boosting the delivery of environmentally sound goods and services while contributing to increased competitiveness at the same time.

- Migration needs to be incorporated into the relevant SDGs and associated targets. In particular, it should be a key element in a possible new Global Partnership for Development.
- Development partnerships must be enlarged through an expansion of multi-stakeholder undertakings at all levels (local, national, regional and global). It is therefore suggested that key types of development partnerships be identified for the successful implementation of the goals and targets. ■

### Messages on accountability and monitoring

- Robust accountability mechanisms must be put in place, with national authorities playing a key role in delivering the agenda. Civil society, the private sector and the scientific community will also have to be part of such mechanisms according to their respective responsibilities in the implementation of the future goals. Comprehensive accountability calls for going beyond domestic policy and beyond borders and should therefore include international mechanisms.

*“People across Europe and Central Asia see good governance as a high priority which should therefore be fully reflected in the new agenda, possibly in the form of a goal.” – Regional Consultation, November 2013, Istanbul.*

- New forms of monitoring progress in development goals and related targets must be established. Strengthening statistical capacities for ensuring reliable data, fostering new sources of data, including citizen-generated data, and using these various sources for policy debate and transparent decision-making are essential parts of the data revolution. ■

<sup>1</sup> This brochure takes up a number of key messages which emerged from the various consultations and events organised in the region, notably the national consultations conducted in 15 countries of Europe and Central Asia involving some 250 000 citizens through town hall meetings, on-line discussion and the “MY world Survey”; the Regional Consultation which was held in Istanbul on 6-8 November 2013; and the inter-agency advocacy publication entitled [“Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia: a common UN vision for the post-2015 development agenda”](#).

<sup>2</sup> The areas outlined here do not constitute an exhaustive list of the themes which emerged from the various consultations: the brochure picks up those for which a strong overall message was conveyed by the various actors involved in the consultations.

# Voices

## from Europe and Central Asia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals



Information Service  
 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)  
 Palais des Nations  
 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
 Telephone: + 41 (0) 22 917 44 44  
 Fax: + 41 (0) 22 917 05 05  
 E-mail: [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org)  
 Website: <http://www.unece.org>

