

# Preface from UNICEF

A lack of education and learning opportunities continues to threaten the future of children in Europe and Central Asia. Across the region, 3.4 million children of primary and secondary school age are out of school, and an additional 19.5 million children in school do not reach the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics. This learning crisis has been further exacerbated by school closures at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

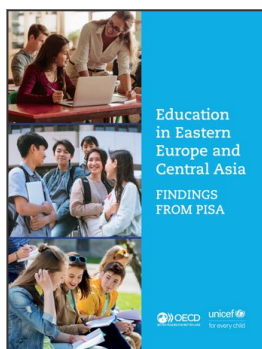
All too often, it is the most marginalised children – including those from minority groups and with disabilities – who bear the brunt of this crisis and are left behind, which widens educational inequality and learning gaps.

This new study, carried out jointly by UNICEF and the OECD, is a contribution to the efforts being made by countries in the region to bridge this gap and achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all children across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Drawing on the large-scale data collected by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 surveys, the study investigates the underlying challenges of promoting children's learning and skills development, and provides new knowledge on how we can collectively address the unmet learning needs of every child.

We hope that this study will contribute to the development of education systems that provide all children with quality learning and a chance to reach their full potential. UNICEF will continue to listen to the voices of children and work with governments, development partners, civil society organisations and the private sector to ensure that every child learns and acquires new skills for the future.



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