

## Economic and family shocks in European transition economies have negatively affected childcare and increased school dropout rates

A new report published today on [IZA World of Labor](http://wpl.iza.org) shows that access to education has been hampered by economic and family shocks in south-east Europe and countries of the former Soviet Union

Lucia Mangiavacchi, Associate Professor at the Department of Applied Economics, University of the Balearic Islands, summarizes her findings: “Compared to developing economies, European transition economies had high levels of human capital when their transitions began, but a lack of resources and policies to protect poor families hampered children’s access to education, especially for non-compulsory school grades. Different phenomena associated with transition also negatively affected children’s education: e.g. parental absence due to migration, health problems, and alcohol abuse”.

During the transition period, south-east Europe and FSU countries were characterized by a “care drain,” as their middle-aged women were frequently employed as carers for the elderly in western Europe. This increased the proportion of children growing up without their mothers. In 2005 in Albania, around 6% of children under the age of 15 were living without one of their parents because of migration. A study found that an additional month of being left behind by a parent increases a child’s probability of dropping out of school by 0.5% and the probability of attending school with delay by 0.6%. For adolescents this reduced the probability of staying in school by 9% and increased the probability of delay by 8%. The negative impact was stronger for girls and adolescents living in rural areas.

Parental health also played a role in children’s schooling. A study in Russia found that men of prime working age experienced severe, pervasive health problems during transition; the majority caused by alcohol consumption. The amount of alcohol consumed is a relevant factor in determining fathers’ time spent administering childcare, both negatively and significantly reducing their weekly hours spent in this activity. One additional gram of pure alcohol consumed per day for the average male drinker implies a reduction of 2.5 minutes of childcare time per week. If parents’ time spent with their children is seen as a significant input for children’s educational attainment, then it follows that parental alcohol consumption during transition had a detrimental effect on human capital development.

Mangiavacchi advises policymakers to pay greater attention to expanding educational opportunities and improving the quality of the education system in an effort to recover the stock of human capital that has been lost since the socialist period. Policies should focus on the children whose parents have migrated, have bad health status, or are heavy drinkers.

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### Notes for editors:

- IZA World of Labor (<http://wol.iza.org>) is a global, freely available online resource that provides policy makers, academics, journalists, and researchers, with clear, concise and evidence-based knowledge on labor economics issues worldwide.

- The site offers relevant and succinct information on topics including diversity, migration, minimum wage, youth unemployment, employment protection, development, education, gender balance, labor mobility and flexibility among others.
- Established in 1998, the Institute of Labor Economics ([www.iza.org](http://www.iza.org)) is an independent economic research institute focused on the analysis of global labour markets. Based in Bonn, it operates an international network of about 1,300 economists and researchers spanning more than 45 countries.