Executive Summary

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the realization of the rights of every child, with a special emphasis on the most disadvantaged and excluded children. The Office provided policy advice and technical assistance; facilitated national dialogue; enabled knowledge exchange, monitoring and evaluation; modelled new approaches and services; leveraged resources from different sources; and acted as an independent voice for children.

Critical contribution to the realization of a child’s right to live in a family environment was given through participation in the updated Action Plan on Deinstitutionalization, which places greater focus on preventing family separation. The process of reducing the numbers of children living in residential care continued, with figures decreasing to 1,029 by the end of 2016 (a decrease of more than 85 per cent compared with 2010).

Home visiting services continued to support caregivers to provide nurturing, responsive care and stimulation to children from birth, in two regions – Shumen and Sliven – and was expanded to the Montana region in September. Home visiting was included in the updated Action Plan on Deinstitutionalization and will be scaled up to all 28 regions. The Government of Bulgaria identified early childhood development as a priority for Bulgaria’s presidency of the European Union in 2018.

In August, the Law on Pre-school and School Education entered into force. UNICEF participated in the definition of the State Education Standards on Inclusive Education and in the development of a model for inclusive education in kindergartens. UNICEF Bulgaria supported the creation and implementation of an early warning system for identification of children at risk of dropping out and children out of school in 19 municipalities. Special emphasis was placed on preventing school dropouts by Roma adolescents through targeted interventions at the community level.

An important step forward in juvenile justice, supported by UNICEF Bulgaria, was the draft Diversion and Implementation of Educational Measures Act, introducing international principles for children in conflict with the law and guarantees of due process. The act went through a successful public discussion, which was accompanied by a national advocacy and information campaign. The adoption of the Act by the Council of Ministers was stopped due to the resignation of the Government in November.

The partnership between UNICEF Bulgaria and the Office of the Ombudsman was further strengthened and the ombudsman was actively engaged in joint advocacy for accelerating the reform of the juvenile justice system and ending the detention of unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF Bulgaria supported a capacity assessment of the institution and facilitated bilateral exchange with the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children.

UNICEF Bulgaria worked with the Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve the protection of the rights of refugee and migrant children. UNICEF Bulgaria monitored and reported on refugee and migrant children in detention centres, especially
unaccompanied and separated children; supported reforms of the legal framework and practices that guarantee those rights; and provided recreational and non-formal education activities in the reception centres.

Three combined communication and advocacy campaigns with three national television channels were implemented: on juvenile justice with Nova TV; on child participation in the media with Bulgaria on Air; and on results for children supporting the UNICEF @ 70 brand activation with bTV. UNICEF Bulgaria placed special emphasis on digital engagement to broaden its audience, particularly among millennials.

UNICEF Bulgaria’s high visibility and strong integration between programmes, communication and fundraising contributed to sustaining good results in mobilizing financial resources through engaging individuals and the private sector for child rights. The funds raised during the year amount to US$ 1,261,798 (Bulgarian leva (BGN) 2,241,254), exceeding by 16 per cent the 2016 annual fundraising target and reaching a 3 per cent increase compared with 2015.

The development of the new programme strategic note provided an excellent opportunity for UNICEF Bulgaria to discuss the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child with national stakeholders. Government authorities and partners contributed to the analysis of children’s deprivations and risks related to inequities, identified the most affected groups and the priorities to be addressed by the new country partnership. In November, UNICEF Bulgaria presented the programme strategic note for the new country programme document 2018–2022 to the UNICEF Regional Office. The year concluded with an official letter by the Foreign Minister requesting UNICEF Bulgaria to initiate the drafting of the new CPD in consultation with national partners.

Humanitarian Assistance

Bulgaria has seen an increase since 2013 in the number of migrants and refugees. The State Agency for Refugees reported that 19,418 people applied for international protection in 2016, of which approximately 30 per cent were children, including unaccompanied and separated children.

Due to tighter border controls and stricter immigration policies imposed by neighbouring European countries, the movements of refugees and migrants are becoming more restricted and it is expected that more migrants and refugees will remain in Bulgaria in the future. The majority of them, however, consider Bulgaria as a transit country, as the Government has not approved an integration plan and budget for the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015–2020), and migrants and refugees expect to find better life opportunities in Western Europe.

UNICEF Bulgaria worked with the Government of Bulgaria, UNHCR and NGOs to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children are protected and respected in accordance with the relevant national and international standards. UNICEF and the Ministry of the Interior signed a Memorandum of Understanding to improve the protection of the rights of refugee and migrant children, by monitoring the situation of children in closed centres, training police, and providing technical assistance to improve internal protocols for dealing with children. UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Agency for Refugees aimed at strengthening the protection of the rights of children and women applying for international protection.

UNICEF participated in the Coordination Mechanism, headed by the State Agency for Refugees, to monitor the situation and to coordinate needs assessment, resource mobilization and response to the refugee and migrant crisis. UNICEF also participated in the
Protection Working Group bringing children's needs to discussions to find solutions protecting the rights of asylum seekers.

In partnership with the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, UNICEF Bulgaria monitored and reported on migrant children in detention and advocated for ending the detention of unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF provided legal aid and counselling to unaccompanied and separated children on their rights, legal situation, safety, risks on the journey to and through Europe, and family reunification options. To address the ongoing violation of the legal prohibition for detention of unaccompanied and separated children, to facilitate their immediate release from detention and to create jurisprudence on the issue, numerous strategic litigation cases were filed. Most of the court decisions proclaimed the detention of the unaccompanied and separated children null and void and issued writs for their immediate release from detention.

UNICEF and partners developed a proposal for an alternative care facility for unaccompanied and separated children, which is under discussion by the Government of Bulgaria. UNICEF Bulgaria advocated and provided technical assistance for legal amendments for the timely appointment of guardians to the unaccompanied and separated children and to ensure that the principle of 'best interest determination' is embedded in the policy and practice.

Three training courses were organized for the police and local child protection departments to improve their capacity to understand the special needs of refugee and migrant children and protect their rights. The courses helped to enhance the cooperation between the two administrations. In addition, two training courses on case management related to unaccompanied and separated children were conducted for the inspectors from the Child Pedagogical Rooms of the National Police.

UNICEF Bulgaria and Caritas ran recreational and non-formal educational activities for children in the reception centres and developed a methodology for the structured provision of these activities, including lesson plans and modules on child protection, child development, child rights and cultural needs, and conducted training on the developed methodology.

To promote the engagement of civil society organizations in the response, UNICEF trained 25 NGOs from villages near the border with Turkey and from Sofia on working with refugee and migrant children, advocating for mainstreaming the protection of those children in their regular programming.

Negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants were addressed and tolerance promoted through all communication channels and activities, including an exhibition of pictures of refugee children in schools and public places, and engagement in various conferences and events.

A child protection specialist in emergencies supported UNICEF Bulgaria’s preparedness over five months, in case of an influx of refugees. The Preparedness and Response Strategy and Supply Plan were updated with the support of the Regional Chief of Emergency.

UNICEF Bulgaria actively participated in the regional response led by the UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) through the collection of data, preparation of country situation reports and regular emergency crises management team calls.
Emerging Areas of Importance

**Refugee and migrant children.** Throughout the year, UNICEF Bulgaria supported the Government and civil society to improve the protection of the rights of refugee and migrant children through a wide-ranging policy dialogue and advice for legal amendments, the reform of the child protection system, and the capacity development of the police, child protection departments and NGOs.

UNICEF Bulgaria actively advocated for ending the detention of unaccompanied and separated children and worked with the Government on developing alternative solutions and child-sensitive migration policies. The office supported strategic litigation and provided legal aid and counselling to unaccompanied and separated children in detention to facilitate their immediate release and create jurisprudence on the issue. UNICEF Bulgaria monitored the situation of refugee and migrant children in detention centres and reported violations of their rights. The information gathered helped to address gaps in the child protection system, develop a robust evidence-based advocacy and plan programmatic interventions.

UNICEF Bulgaria also worked on improving the resilience of refugee children to help them overcome the effect of conflict and displacement by initiating the provision of recreational and non-formal learning activities in reception centres, during the fourth quarter of 2016. To address anti-refugee sentiment and sensitise Bulgarian society to the adversities and hardships of children on the move globally, the office participated in two large UNICEF global campaigns, Unfairy Tales and Acts of Humanity.

**Accelerate integrated early childhood development (IECD).** Early childhood development (ECD) is a key priority for UNICEF Bulgaria and is addressed through a cross-sectoral approach that integrates objectives in maternal and child health care, and early learning. During 2016, the Office strengthened the partnerships across a diverse range of actors – government, local authorities, parliamentarians, NGOs, academia, service providers and professional organizations – contributing to laying the foundations for a national policy on early childhood development. Dedicated events for parliamentarians, academia, professionals and policymakers strengthened the understanding of national stakeholders about early childhood development and made recommendations for improving national policies and practice. The strong evidence-based advocacy and mobilization in support of early childhood development provided an excellent opportunity for advancing the ECD agenda at the national level and contributed to the decision of the Government to include ECD as a priority of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2018.

UNICEF Bulgaria supported two national events dedicated to ECD: a round table at the Bulgarian Parliament in partnership with the Bulgarian Paediatric Association and the Bulgarian Red Cross, and a conference at the New Bulgarian University with the participation of international experts as speakers. The outcome was to share knowledge on the contemporary science on early childhood development and its implications for policy and practice. UNICEF helped to prepare and publish a series of articles from Bulgarian experts on different issues relating to ECD in the Bulgaria Paediatric Association journal. Technical support was provided to the Ministry of Health for the development of standards for early childhood development, for care of children in nurseries. Home visiting to promote healthy growth and development of children under 3 years old was included in the new updated Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy ‘Vision for deinstitutionalization’. These were some of the government measures to ensure that children grow up in a nurturing family environment and prevent separation from their families.
UNICEF Bulgaria continued to make significant effort in building on existing capacity and empowerment of rights holders and duty bearers. Community services, supported in the three prioritized regions, including family centres and home visiting services, incorporated individual and community capacity development in their interventions. In the five family centres in Montana Shumen regions, 927 families were provided with individual consultations and participated in group sessions to increase their knowledge about responsible parenting and strengthening parental skills and capacities to respond adequately to the developmental needs of their children. Through the home visiting service in Shumen and Sliven, more than 6,400 families and caregivers were supported to ensure healthy growth and development of children under 3 years old, in a nurturing family environment, by providing adequate nourishment, positive stimulation and nurturing care.

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the ‘Let’s grow up together’ – workshops for parents’ programme, which aims to strengthen parental knowledge, skills and attitudes for positive parenting of children up to 3 or 4 years old. During the workshops parents have a chance to learn more about child development during early childhood and children’s needs, as well as interact and receive support from other parents. The workshops are delivered through a network of partners, including local authorities, community-based organizations and local libraries in 20 localities of the country, resulting in more than 350 parents benefiting from them in 2016.

The individual consultations and group sessions were also used to provide parents with information about their rights and roles in their children’s upbringing.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF Bulgaria joined efforts with key partners to generate evidence and influence policy dialogue in all relevant areas, but especially in juvenile justice. In partnership with NGOs and the Ombudsman Office, information was collected on the gaps in the administration of justice for children and on the violations of the rights of children in the Social-Pedagogical and Correctional Educational Boarding Schools. This supported advocacy to stop the detention and placement of children in those institutions and showed the urgency for reforming the juvenile justice system.

To promote children’s equitable access to justice in line with the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda 2, UNICEF Bulgaria organized a series of consultations with the main stakeholders and justice professionals. These were to jointly review the availability of data on children’s access to justice and to improve the desegregated collection of data related to juvenile justice. UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice, justice sector professionals, NGOs and the
Ombudsman Office used this information and analysis to push for the necessary legal and policy reform.

The advocacy efforts were accompanied by a national communication campaign, ‘Sentenced childhood? Justice for every child’, based on the quantitative and qualitative data and human interest stories. The campaign helped to inform society about the rights of children in conflict with the law and supported the successful process of public discussion on the newly proposed Act on Diversion and Implementation of Educational Measures for Underage Offenders.

**Partnerships**

The strategic corporate partnership ‘Best Start for Every Child’ between UNICEF Bulgaria and Post Bank, launched in 2013, continued to promote home visiting in early years as an effective strategy to ensure the best start in life for every child. The partnership, which started with a broad advocacy campaign about the importance of the first three years of life, served as a basis for engaging the Ministry of Health, district administrations, municipalities, medical centres and NGOs. This related to the development and implementation of the model Centre for Maternal and Child Health, providing home visiting at regional level. More than 500,000 people have supported UNICEF with donations via ATM, cash or online. The overall contribution by Post Bank was 819,551 BGN (US$442,096) over a period of three years, of which 174,738 BGN (US$93,925) was raised in 2016.

Through the partnership with Post Bank and the Velux Foundation, the visiting nurses carried out 47,000 home visits and supported more than 8,000 families in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, over the past three years.

In 2016, efforts were focused on sharing the results achieved with Post Bank’s clients and employees as well as the wider public through stories of children and families who have received support from the Centre for Maternal and Child Health in Sliven. A new home visiting service was established in the region of Montana and the Government of Bulgaria decided about scaling-up the model in all 28 regions, including home visiting as a special measure in the updated Plan on Deinstitutionalization.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

The external communication and public advocacy efforts of UNICEF Bulgaria were aligned with global priorities and focused on juvenile justice, End Violence against Children, inclusive education, child participation, solidarity with child refugees and migrants, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNICEF Bulgaria acted as convener and managed to engage three national media groups to promote child rights and well-being. A new partnership with Nova TV sensitized society to the rights of children in conflict with the law. A targeted initiative with Investor Media Group prioritized the importance of child participation. A strategic partnership with bTV bridged advocacy and fundraising to present results for children (family environment, prevention of violence, inclusive education) and activate brand visibility on UNICEF @ 70 – resulting in 8,000 new pledge donors and a reach of 2 million people.

Supporting the milestone anniversary of UNICEF, UNICEF Bulgaria encompassed a variety of global initiatives; Unfairy Tales set a platform for reinforcing the fight against discrimination of refugee and migrant children; Tiny Stories inspired Bulgarian authors and influencers to share messages for children; and the World’s Largest Lesson engaged about 15,000 students with the SDGs. UNICEF Bulgaria reactivated the End Violence against Children campaign to demonstrate with video stories how UNICEF-supported Child

Main Key Performance Indicator results: traditional media: 65 neutral/35 positive; social media: Facebook 110,000 followers, 21,489,688 reach (4.44 per cent engagement rate); Twitter 2,554 followers, 609,500 reach (0.5 per cent engagement rate); Instagram 1,068 followers, 5,000 likes; YouTube views 39,060; and website: reach 65,084/engagement 25.5 per cent, unique users 80,852.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

UNICEF Bulgaria assisted knowledge exchange and learning between countries in various areas, including monitoring the situation and protection of migrant children and families, deinstitutionalization, education, and overall child rights protection and promotion. One successful example was UNICEF’s supported partnership between the Bulgarian Ombudsman Office and the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, the first independent human rights institution focused exclusively on children.

The cooperation aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Bulgarian Ombudsman to independently monitor, protect and promote the rights of children by learning from the experience of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children. Most of the activities were related to sharing information on the role, functions and responsibilities of the two Ombudsman institutions. This included a joint conference in the Bulgarian Parliament with a large audience of Members of Parliament, government officials, civil society and the media. UNICEF Bulgaria supported a study visit to Oslo for experts from the Bulgarian Ombudsman Office and representatives from the National Network for Children, including an assessment on the capacities of the Bulgarian Ombudsman Office to monitor and promote child rights.

The exchange of good practices and experience between the two institutions helped the Bulgarian Ombudsman act as a strong advocate for children and lead important discussions on the rights of children in conflict with the law, reform of the juvenile justice system, and the rights of migrant and refugee children.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF Bulgaria promoted children’s rights in all programme components and activities and supported the dissemination of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2016. Policy advice and technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Education and Science to introduce inclusive education to all kindergartens and schools in line with the recommendations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The sustained policy dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs influenced the decision made by the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Rights for Bulgaria to sign the Third Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017.


UNICEF Bulgaria, UNHCR and civil society organizations advocated for and provided technical assistance to improve the protection of children on the move. UNICEF Bulgaria
and partners monitored and reported on migrant children in detention and supported strategic litigation to facilitate their immediate release and create jurisprudence on the legal prohibition for detention of unaccompanied and separated children. A proposal was developed for an alternative care facility for unaccompanied and separated children, under discussion with the Government, and for legal amendments for timely appointment of guardians to these children as well as the best interest determination.

The development of the new Programme Strategic Note for 2018–2020 provided an excellent opportunity to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women among partners. The 2016 recommendations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2015 recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review were included in the Programme Strategic Note development through a participatory process. Government authorities and other stakeholders contributed to the analysis of children’s deprivations, vulnerabilities and risks related to inequities. They identified the most affected groups of children and the priorities to be addressed by the new country partnership.

**Gender Equality**

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to work on two of the four targeted gender priorities: (1) advancing girls’ secondary education and (2) ending child marriage. UNICEF interventions were specifically targeted at Roma adolescent girls. The Office organized two round tables (in Sofia and in Shumen) with state institutions, local authorities and NGOs to present the main findings from UNICEF research on social norms related to child marriages among Roma communities. Based on the results and recommendations, the three family centres in Shumen developed programmes for preventing child marriages and promoting Roma adolescent girls’ access to secondary education. Some 266 Roma adolescent girls and boys participated in motivational health and educational activities to prevent child marriage and 69 adolescent mothers were helped to develop their parental skills.

Women’s and girls’ well-being and rights have also been mainstreamed in: (1) the home visiting services that have helped to improve women’s and young children’s health in Montana, Shumen and Sliven regions and (2) the three child advocacy centres that have supported children and women victims of violence in Montana, Shumen and Sofia. In 2016, a total of 6,000 girls and women were reached and supported under the two initiatives. The home visiting service also placed a specific focus on involving fathers in the care of young children by encouraging them to be present during the home visits and participate in the discussions on the care of the children.

These two initiatives involved the policy and knowledge coordinator (also gender focal point), the child protection specialist, the child protection and social services officer, the ECD officer and the education officer. The budget for the round tables was US$10,000, the annual budget of the three family centres was US$269,000, the annual budget of the home visiting programme was US$282,000 and the annual budget for the three child advocacy centres was US$243,000.

**Environmental Sustainability**

UNICEF Bulgaria took part in the global UNICEF initiative on environmental sustainability and recorded its environmental footprint for the second time.

The following initiatives were undertaken: reduce travel and increase online collaboration, including training; responsible disposal of unusable electronic waste; used battery collection point; separation of paper, plastic, and glass garbage for recycling and avoid using plastic bottle and glass; use of recycled paper for printing in the office,
double-sided printing as the standard setting; and use of electrical taxis for work-related transportation within the city, when no office car is available.

In the area of advocacy and accountability on climate change, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to engage children and adolescents in discussing climate change and the key environmental challenges of our world and country specific through the rolling out of the World’s Largest Lesson initiative in more than 150 schools.

**Effective Leadership**

The country management team (CMT) monitored the application of standards, policies and procedures as well as the priorities in the annual management plan and rolling work plan monthly. The team approved the annual management plan, the institutional and programme budgets, the update of the country office risk assessment input form, and the country office emergency preparedness and response strategy. In October, the country management team approved a revision of the annual management plan to reflect the proposed simplification of business processes. Management indicators were monitored using InSight tools.

The business continuity plan was updated and UNICEF Bulgaria identified the risks, applying enterprise risk management in all spheres of its work. The risk assessment input form was revised in InSight and identified eight risk areas. The Early Warning Early Awareness system was updated throughout the year, with the latest update in December. In October, the country management team adjusted the annual management plan to simplify business processes in eight areas to ensure better efficiency within existing UNICEF guidance.

To reduce risks in programmes and operations, the separation of functions was applied as well as full compliance with the table of authorities. The table was updated on a regular basis to reflect changes and was further enhanced to include Vision roles and alternate staff in case of absence. Continued monitoring of programme financial implementation enabled UNICEF Bulgaria to avoid having liquidations pending for more than nine months.

UNICEF Bulgaria was part of the first group from the CEE/CIS region to migrate to the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) in mid-March 2016. Workflows were developed to adjust to the new working modality.

The Office was subject to an internal audit by the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, with an on-site visit at the beginning of April 2016. The audit report was issued in September and UNICEF Bulgaria has been addressing the five recommendations (medium priority) made in the areas of risk identification and mitigation, ethics, resources mobilization strategy, a harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) and direct cash transfer management.

**Financial Resources Management**

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to implement the approach of managing and recording private-sector fund-raising contributions first adopted in 2015. Procedures, approved by the country management team, are in place to ensure systematic, timely and accurate recordings of private-sector fund-raising income.

The Country Office continued to apply HACT regulations. A total of 11 spot checks and 46 programmatic visits were conducted. Liquidations were processed based on evidence that activities had been performed and had approval from the respective programme officers. Progress of HACT assurance activities was monitored regularly through quarterly HACT meetings and by the country management team.
UNICEF Bulgaria financial operations, including monthly bank reconciliations, and master data management were transferred to the GSSC in March 2016. Although the newly applied payment process saves time and effort executing transactions, it takes additional time to maintain a log of documents uploaded on the GSSC portal for further processing. UNICEF Bulgaria has created additional workflows and processes to adapt to the GSSC requirements.

An inventory/physical count of the assets was performed in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards requirements. All items correspond to Vision records.

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria purchased two new vehicles to replace the old ones with expiring life cycles. The vehicles were procured without value-added tax. The old vehicles were sold and the office will utilize the revenue from the proceeds in 2017.

Global Performance Indicators were regularly monitored by the country management team. At the end of 2016, there were:
- No outstanding direct cash transfers more than months;
- 100 per cent utilization of the regular resources budget;
- 100 per cent utilization of the institutional budget;
- 100 per cent utilization of the other resources – regular budget from the allotment, with the rest of the funds re-phased to 2017; and
- Other resources – emergency utilization was 100 per cent, with the remaining funds also re-phased to 2017. There are no remaining balances in expired other resources – regular funds.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria raised funds from various sources, nationally and internationally.

Funds received were from the Velux Foundation (US$ 302,987), UNICEF France National Committee (US$370,677), and U.S. Fund for UNICEF (US$46,296) and David Beckham Fund/UNICEF United Kingdom National Committee (US$56,621). Thematic funds (US$240,800) were also received.

UNICEF Bulgaria further developed its strategic partnerships with the business sector through an integrated approach to corporate engagement, which includes resource mobilization, corporate social responsibility and advocacy initiatives.

UNICEF Bulgaria successfully engaged private individuals through monthly donations via SMS text messaging, raising flexible and sustainable resources for UNICEF programmes to advance children’s rights.

Key achievements in 2016 include:

- Overall, gross income from local private-sector fund-raising was BGN 2,241,254 (US$ 1,261,798), which represents a 3 per cent increase in comparison with 2015, and was 16 per cent more than the target for 2016 as per the mid-term review revision (2015).

- Income from corporate partnerships amounted to BGN 901,088 (US$503,242) – a 9 per cent decrease in comparison with 2015, which is in line with the private-sector fund-raising strategy (2013–2017), with a focus on pledges.

- Income from private individual donors was BGN 1,340,166 (US$758,536), a 14 per cent increase in BGN in comparison with 2015; of which monthly pledge donors was BGN
1,261,135 (US$714,539), a 35 per cent increase in BGN in comparison to 2015. In 2016, the number of monthly pledge donors grew by more than 8,000.

- Contribution to global regular resources (20 per cent of the pledge) is BGN 252,227 (US$142,908). Some 52 per cent (US$1,118,890 out of US$2,136,271) of the received other resources in 2016 came from local private-sector fund-raising.

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria reached/utilized 69 per cent of the approved other resources ceiling for the five-year country programme cycle (US$8,670,436 out of US$12,500,000).

**Evaluation and Research**

The Plan for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) included one evaluation, three research initiatives, and several assessments and surveys. Out of the 13 planned activities, 3 were completed, 6 are on track, 3 have been postponed and rescheduled, and 1 has been discontinued.

A situation analysis was prepared on children and women in Bulgaria 2016. The analysis used a wide range of available administrative data and analysis from government studies and planning documents. After a final round of official consultation with partners, the analysis will be completed and published in the first half of 2017.

As planned, in 2016, the independent evaluation was initiated for the Family for Every Child project, implemented by UNICEF from 2011 to 2016. UNICEF Bulgaria used both internal and external quality assurance support for the terms of reference development and reviewing the draft report. The data collection for the evaluation took more time than envisaged and the evaluation is to be completed in the first quarter of 2017.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The following cost savings and efficiency gains were achieved in 2016 by UNICEF Bulgaria:

The Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) migration for Finance, MDM in March and human resources in September required time to adapt certain processes. While it brings quality assurance to the processes and removes some processes completely (i.e., bank reconciliation), it is time-consuming to prepare and submit documents in MyCase.

UNICEF Bulgaria continues to contribute US$ 5,500 annually to the total for CEE/CIS, provided to the Centre, in addition to the US$ 3,000 per post, per year contribution to headquarters.

During 2016, the office continued to apply the new methodology for zero value-added tax with its vendors. As a result, more than US$ 64,000 in savings were realized, which increased the funds available for programme implementation.

UNICEF Bulgaria occupies government-provided rent-free premises for the fifth year in a row, realizing annual rent savings of about US$ 50,000.

Sharing of office security services with other tenants in the building saves approximately US$ 2,000 per year.

Cost savings were optimized on mobile telephone bills in 2016.

The two obsolete official vehicles were replaced with sales proceeds to be utilized by the office in 2017.
Throughout 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to manage resources efficiently, such as electricity, heating, water and waste services.

Standard value-added tax and excise reimbursement processes were enhanced.

**Supply Management**

UNICEF Bulgaria does not have dedicated supply staff members or significant supply activities. Programme assistants and the administrative assistant/information and communication technology (ICT) focal point perform procurement functions, overseen by the programme officers and operations officer.

The main procurement activities were related to services (consultants, translation), followed by other programmatic services, office equipment and official vehicles. UNICEF Bulgaria finalized procurement of programme supplies: five vehicles for implementing partners. Deliveries were made directly to counterparts and supplies were monitored through field visits.

The Office procured two printers, one digital sender and one shredder, replacement kits and consumables. In addition to finalizing the procurement of one new official vehicle, one more was purchased to replace an old office car.

The procurement of services was mainly for consultancies in support of programme implementation, including HACT (micro-assessments), organization of communication/fundraising campaigns and printing services.

UNICEF Bulgaria predominantly used local providers. International expertise is sought for highly specialized consultancies or specialized equipment not available in the country. For local procurement, UNICEF Bulgaria follows the general supply processes guidelines, adhering to standardized global payment terms and delivery options. The assistance of the Support unit of the Supply Division of UNICEF Bulgaria is sought for unknown and complex matters.

At the end of 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria organized delivery of goods (non-food items – clothing for children) from UNICEF Serbia to support the reception centres for asylum seekers in Bulgaria. The delivery was facilitated by UNICEF Serbia and the cost was covered by the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office. The total value of the procured supplies was US$ 66,904 UNICEF Bulgaria does not operate a warehouse.

Table 1: Total value of supplies received (irrespective of procurement location), split by programmatic and operational supplies and services, including construction:

<table>
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<th>US dollars</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Operational</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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Security for Staff and Premises

The security situation in Bulgaria is calm and stable, with only minor security incidents but with no direct threats to United Nations operations or personnel.

The security risk assessment was updated and approved by the senior management team in October 2016. Staff and personnel were informed about security protocols and safety precautions were issued where needed. Staff responsible for receiving office visitors and postal packages were informed about the procedures and requirements in terms of safety. A security guard from a private security company provided services throughout the year, ensuring a safe working environment. Drivers provided safe and reliable transportation throughout the year.

An evacuation drill was performed to test staff readiness and response. The calling tree is kept up-to-date to enable quicker transmission of information.

UNICEF Bulgaria also facilitated and conducted activities related to safety and security of all United Nations staff in Bulgaria and their dependents: The Representative is the Designated Official for safety and security, and the Communication Assistant is the Country Security Focal Point.

Human Resources

Three staff were recruited on a temporary appointment: a child protection officer on social services (National Officer-A) in social services, a communication for social change officer (National Officer-A) and a programme officer on refugees and migrant children (National Officer-A). A temporary appointment post for programme officer on access to justice (National Officer-A) was advertised in December.

The operations officer (National Officer-B) was reassigned in September to the Regional Emergency Cell and the recruitment of a new operations officer is still under way. The administrative/finance assistant (General Service-6) retired in October and the new incumbent started in November.

Completion of the 2015 year-end performance appraisal system in February 2016 was 95 per cent due to one staff member on maternity leave. All staff completed their performance appraisals in the new electronic system, ACHIEVE, as required.

All recommendations from the 2014 Global Staff Survey have been completed. To address the career development recommendation, UNICEF Bulgaria conducted human resources training with the regional human resources specialist. For the information and knowledge sharing recommendation, the Office continued to have regular all-staff meetings, as well as coordination and programme meetings for planning and information sharing. The management decision to continue the practice of optimized official working hours after the initial trial period has had a positive effect on work-life balance.

Staff developments and trainings: The following group and online trainings were completed in 2016: Human Resources, HACT, Funding Authorization and Certificate of Expenditure, Results-Based Management and Ethics.

In addition, these individual staff members participated in:

- Policy and Knowledge Coordinator – Advanced Results-Based Management training and Regional Coaching Initiative for Deputy Representatives
- Operations Officer – Certified International Public Finance Accounting online diploma completed and Talent management system
UNICEF Bulgaria updated the business continuity plan and disaster recovery plans to reflect all current changes and corporate developments. Regular testing was performed.

The Office also continued to improve its ICT systems. Adjustments were performed in line with UNICEF requirements, including hardware upgrades and Windows 8.1 image installation in preparation for migration to LIGHT office technology. This ensured a smooth and successful transition. This meant customers received extended access to all ICT resources via their corporate laptops and smartphones.

The increased access and processing time, a drawback of new technology implementation, was overcome by establishing three PCs as local servers for the key application processes: Donor Perfect, Bank Application, and Communications Video Productions Processing.

Successful tests for implementing Skype for Business were performed.

The speed was increased for the second and independent Internet access line through Wi-Fi routers. The office equipment now provides a timely, reliable and secure information flow and the possibility for end users to work from anywhere with Internet access.

As with all business applications, email servers and file servers are based in the UNICEF regional office or headquarters. UNICEF Bulgaria continues to rely on IT services provided.

Overall, support for end users in UNICEF Bulgaria is provided simultaneously, such as local computer installation and configuration, software upgrades, user’s training and consultations, etc. An additional digital sender and shredder were procured to meet the increased requirements to streamline processes.

UNICEF Bulgaria’s communication and fund-raising strategies are supported online by the website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, SMS communication and other channels. The office deals internally with content management and outsources support services such as hosting and maintenance, and management of the Content Management System platform.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1: By 2017, more children from excluded and poor families benefit from equal access to education and protection systems.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In the fourth year of the Country Programme, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to promote equity and support social inclusion for the most disadvantaged families and children. This was achieved by providing policy advice and technical assistance in critical areas, facilitating
national dialogue, enabling knowledge exchange, monitoring and evaluation, modelling new approaches and services, leveraging resources from different sources and acting as an independent voice for children and adolescents.

The process of reducing the number of children living in residential institutions continued throughout 2016. In November, 1,029 children were placed in these centres (a decrease of more than 85 per cent compared with 2010) and 2,381 children in the foster-care system. However, the rate of children in formal care remained the same and more effort is needed to prevent separation from their families.

UNICEF Bulgaria participated actively in preparing the updated Action Plan on Deinstitutionalization, which was adopted by the Government in October 2016. The plan articulates the steps for the continuation of child-care reform and has put a stronger focus on the prevention of family separation. A positive step is the envisaged national scaling up of the home-visiting services, modelled by UNICEF in three target regions.

New projects for developing social services, strengthening the child protection system and supporting marginalized communities, were launched under the Operation Programme Human Resources Development. UNICEF participated in the programme’s Monitoring Committee and influenced the increased allocation of funding for children through knowledge sharing and technical advice.

The State Agency for Child Protection, with UNICEF support, initiated the development of a National Programme for Prevention of Violence against Children (2017–2021), which will be adopted in early 2017. The Government of Bulgaria also initiated the drafting of a new Law on Social Services as well as amendments to the Family Code.

The ECD services in 66 municipalities across the country became fully operational, with European Union funds providing parenting support and family counselling, early intervention, inclusion of children with disabilities in early education, health promotion, and early education and care. UNICEF was involved in the creation of cooperation links and integration between the new and existing services in the region’s three respective municipalities. These regions were prioritized by the Country Programme Document due to the high levels of exclusion and poverty.

Due to the continuing joint advocacy efforts between UNICEF, the World Bank and civil society, a national consensus agreed on the need to develop an ECD National Strategy. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy confirmed its commitment to initiate the formulation of such a strategy in 2017. It requested support from UNICEF with evidence generation and analyses. The Government also identified ECD as one of three priorities for Bulgaria’s presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2018.

On 1 August 2016, the new Pre-school and School Education Act entered into force. It introduced new types of support for inclusive education, put a special focus on preventing dropouts with a focus on marginalized and vulnerable children and introduced two years of compulsory preschool education. Furthermore, UNICEF contributed to the development of the new State Education Standards on Inclusive Education adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science.

UNICEF participated in the working groups of the new Operation Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth, where additional European Union funds were allocated to strengthen the capacity of schools. These set out to improve students’ motivation and learning outcomes, promote learning-by-doing programmes with activities and introduce the dual learning system. Under the Support for Equal Access and Personal Development
project, the Ministry of Education and Science continued to develop and scale up an inclusive education model in 113 schools and 64 kindergartens with the support of UNICEF. In 2016, an important step forward was made by introducing an overall Justice for Children approach with the preparation of the new act in juvenile justice and the amendments to the Penal Code and Penal Procedure Code, initiated by the Ministry of Justice and supported by UNICEF. The draft Diversion and Implementation of Educational Measures Act introduces guiding principles for treating children in conflict with the law and guarantees for due process. It defines the minimum age of criminal responsibility as 14 years old, abolishes the term 'anti-social behaviour', regulates diversion from criminal proceedings, provides a wide range of alternative measures and reinforces the use of deprivation of liberty as a last resort and for the minimum period. Furthermore, it regulates the specialization of all professionals working with children who are alleged of, accused of or recognized as having infringed on penal law. Another positive development was the introduction of the restorative justice approach through mediation and family counselling.

The development of a new Law on Social Services, adoption of a new Act on Juvenile Justice and of the amendments to the Family Code have been stopped due to the resignation of the Government in November 2016.

Working towards this outcome has contributed to the advancement of the CEE/CIS Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda in several key result areas, such as a child’s right to a supportive and caring family environment, a child’s right of access to justice, a child’s right to early learning, a child’s right to inclusive quality education, a young child’s right to comprehensive well-being, a child’s right to social protection and an adolescent’s right to a second chance.

**OUTPUT 1:** By the end of 2017, based on the results of tailored approaches in three regions, key stakeholders at central level (especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Health) ensure that relevant regulatory provisions and budget allocations incorporate effective, culturally sensitive and accessible prevention and protection services for vulnerable and marginalized children, especially children at risk of family separation, children living in institutions and children with disabilities.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF Bulgaria supported legislative developments through active participation in the task forces established by the Government, in the area of social services, adoption, protection of child victims and witnesses of crime and violence. A review of the national legislation, related to the country regulations for prevention and response to violence against children, was initiated to inform a task force convened by Parliament. A complete review of the national legislation on domestic and inter-country adoption in line with international standards will inform the amendment of the Family Code.

The office provided technical assistance and policy advice for the update of the Action Plan for Deinstitutionalization, approved in October. A needs analysis of the foster-care system informed the development of the Annual Action Plan for the Foster Me project. Furthermore, UNICEF Bulgaria supported the development of a training programme for social workers and initiated a discussion on the specialization of the foster-care service to improve the service quality. An evaluation of the UNICEF-supported Family for Every Child project in the Shumen region was carried out with the involvement by all project partners. The report, expected in 2017, will inform national policies for preventing family separation and improvement of child care and development in marginalized communities.

Demonstration modelling interventions on outreach family support services (i.e., Family Centres) continued in the region of Shumen and two new ones were launched in the region...
of Montana. In 2016, the five Family Centres prevented 182 cases of separation of children from their families, provided assistance to 606 children for admission to kindergarten and access to health care and education. The Centres worked with 927 families promoting positive parenting practices and 850 children through individual counselling and group programmes. In addition, family planning services were provided to 87 women. Country know-how informed the CO contribution to the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda 1 on the right of every child to a family environment.

UNICEF continued to promote the development of child-sensitive alternatives to detention. A Centre for Psychological Support, a Centre for Intensive Socio-Pedagogical Support, and Transitional and Supervised Homes Services provided support to children in conflict with the law and at risk, in Sliven region. State funding was ensured for majority of the services. The capacity of the social workers, police, prosecutors and judges from the child protection and juvenile justice systems in the region were also strengthened through trainings.

The three Child Advocacy Centres in Montana, Shumen and Sofia provided support to 164 child victims of violence and their families. Their practices and results were reviewed in 2016 in line with international best practice, and recommendations were made to further strengthen their capacity. The management capacity and coordination with the justice, child protection, health and education systems were strengthened through technical assistance and trainings in the three regions.

OUTPUT 2: By 2017, relevant stakeholders at all levels in the health, education and social protection systems apply inter-sectoral protocols of cooperation that enable the effective provision of integrated ECD services for the most disadvantaged and marginalized families and children, including from ethnic minority groups.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Bulgaria continued to advocate with national partners for the adoption of an integrated national strategy on ECD. The framework should ensure a holistic approach to children’s well-being in all relevant policies and be cross-sector, as well as ensure support for the development of the most disadvantaged children. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy confirmed its commitment to initiate the formulation of such a strategy in 2017. Two dedicated events were organized in partnership with the Health Commission of the Bulgarian Parliament, the Bulgarian Paediatric Association, Bulgarian Red Cross, and New Bulgarian University. These involved more than 200 policymakers, professionals, academics and representatives of civil society, which further consolidated the support of ECD and identified areas for policy intervention in support of ECD.

Home visiting services in Montana, Shumen and Sliven regions, established with support from UNICEF, continued to promote nurturing family child-care practices. More than 6,400 families and caregivers in Shumen and Sliven regions benefited from different packages of services depending on their needs, while strengthening their skills and resources to support healthy child development. These services ensured support in the two regions to more than 60 per cent of the child population under the age of 3. Access to antenatal care was facilitated for pregnant women without health insurance. The service quality was ensured through continuous training and supervision, including facilitating the exchange of international expertise on home visiting.

Home visiting was included in the updated Action Plan for Deinstitutionalization, adopted by the Council of Ministers in October. It provides for establishing the service in all 28 regions of the country, initially with European Union funding and later with funding from the national budget.
With support from UNICEF, the capacities of more than 350 parents and caregivers of young children were developed in the area of positive parenting through a network of partners, local authorities, community-based organizations and NGOs from 20 localities in Bulgaria. Based on the Early Learning and Development Standards for children 0–3 years of age, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science, with the participation of UNICEF, drafted a Regulation of Standards for Care and Learning of Children in Nurseries. The regulation is expected to be adopted in 2017. In addition, the Early Learning and Development Standards continued to be disseminated to inform relevant professionals and service providers practice.

OUTPUT 3: By the end of 2017, government at all levels, with the support of NGOs and education institutions, implements school enrolment, drop-out prevention and second-chance education strategies for children, especially Roma girls and children with disabilities, who are not enrolled in, that have dropped out or that are at-risk of dropping out of compulsory education.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the Government of Bulgaria to realize a child’s right to education and to include all children in quality learning, with a special focus on inclusive education and drop-out prevention. In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education and Science focused on the introduction of inclusive education as well as other priority areas such as promoting ECD; decreasing the percentage of early school leavers; preventing school violence and addressing bullying at school; as well as enhancing child participation and child rights education.

The modelling work to introduce inclusive education in 33 nurseries and kindergartens in four regions continued throughout 2016. In September, UNICEF supported a ‘train the trainers’ workshop on inclusive early education targeted at training organizations and experts of the Ministry of Education and Science and developing the programme with modules for specialists, mainstream teachers and other educators. In addition, policy advice and technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Education and Science for the development of the State Education Standards on Inclusive Education, which were adopted by Parliament in November 2016.

To support the inclusion and engagement of adolescents and young people who are not in employment, education and training, UNICEF Bulgaria presented research on social enterprises and their potential to reintegrate such people in the three prioritized regions. Responding to the request from the regional government, some municipalities, local ombudsman and NGOs, the office initiated a programme to build the capacities of service providers, youth organizations and business incubators and to promote social entrepreneurship in the Shumen region.

To create effective interventions for the prevention of early school leaving, especially by Roma adolescent girls, UNICEF Bulgaria organized a national round table and local event in Shumen aimed at identifying good practices and new approaches for addressing the issue. To further support the efforts of the municipal governments, UNICEF Bulgaria initiated the development of an integrated programme for the prevention of Roma adolescent girl school dropouts to be piloted with support from the Family Centres in 2017.

The implementation of the National Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving was supported with the development of an Early Warning system to identify children at risk of dropping out and children already out of school, which was piloted in 19 municipalities from 9 regions. UNICEF Bulgaria facilitated knowledge sharing on the system’s best practices in
Europe and supported the Ministry of Education and Science in the system implementation and scale-up.

The modelling work on introducing an innovative approach to improve the educational outcomes of marginalized children continued, with the validation of the model for children from Grades 1–4 and its expansion for children from Grades 5–8. Up to 400 students are expected to take part in the new phase of the project.

UNICEF Bulgaria developed teacher and students’ materials for The World’s Largest Lesson initiative. Since September 2016, about 15,000 Bulgarian students have participated in special lessons on the SDGs and another 22,000 students registered for a lesson in 2017.

**OUTPUT 4:** By 2015, the Government enacts revised legislation that introduces intersectoral coordination and alternatives to custodial service for children in conflict with the law.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to provide policy advice and technical assistance to the Government to ensure equitable access to justice for children. The main advocacy efforts and support were focused on the reform of the juvenile justice system and the procedures and practices involving child victims and witnesses of violence and crime.

The office provided substantive support to the Ministry of Justice to draft the new Diversions from Criminal Proceedings and Implementation of Alternative Measures Act and the amendments to the Penal Code and Penal Procedure Code. The act went through a successful public discussion procedure with strong support by the Ombudsperson facilitated by UNICEF in October. The process of adoption of the act by the Council of Ministers has now been stopped due to the Government resigning on 14 November.

A national communication campaign was launched by UNICEF Bulgaria in partnership with Nova TV, the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman, the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Education and Science to inform citizens on juvenile justice reform and raise awareness about the negative impacts of the deprivation of liberty on children's health and development.

Efforts to ensure fair and just treatment of children placed in correctional facilities and children in conflict with the law continued with the provision of free legal aid, including strategic litigation in several key cases, as well as provision of consultation and support services in the Sliven region.

Regarding child victims and witnesses of violence and crime, UNICEF took an active role in drafting the amendments in the Penal Procedure Code aimed at creating procedural guarantees for child-sensitive hearings and prevention of further and secondary victimization.

Cooperation with the Prosecutor General was consolidated through new activities aimed to strengthen institutional capacity to ensure children’s access to justice; collecting desegregated data on child participants in judicial proceedings; and building prosecutors’ capability to handle cases involving children in a child-sensitive manner. A series of ‘train the trainer’ sessions were organized on child rights and procedural guarantees for children involved in judicial proceedings during the year. Some 18 prosecutors were trained to train 40 colleagues by November 2016.

UNICEF Bulgaria continued supporting the overall process of specialization for all professionals working with children in judicial proceedings, through advocacy for change in legislation and internal procedures. Furthermore, court specialization was supported through
advocacy for the inclusion of more regional and district courts in piloting specialized panels and chambers in cases involving children and providing technical assistance to train experts and implement rules and guidance for the pilot courts.

The office actively contributed to the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda 2, including through piloting the self-assessment of the indicators in the area of access to justice and collecting useful feedback from both government and non-government partners.

OUTCOME 2: By 2017, a national alliance for children (involving the Government, international community, civil society, private sector and the media) mobilizes support, capacity and resources to significantly advance the rights of Bulgarian children and youth.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
A main priority continued to be policy advice and technical assistance to strengthen the capacities of national institutions and civil society to monitor and advance child rights in country and internationally. Special emphasis was placed on realizing the rights of children in correctional institutions, children in conflict with the law, and refugee and migrant children. UNICEF and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee monitored and reported on the rights of refugee and migrant children, especially unaccompanied and separated children.

UNICEF Bulgaria signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of the Interior to develop its employees’ capacity to protect refugee and migrant children’s rights, child victims of violence and children involved in legal proceedings. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with the State Agency for Refugees to strengthen the protection of the rights of children and women applying for international protection in the country, with a special focus on the needs of unaccompanied and separated children.

After the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNICEF Bulgaria and the Office of the Ombudsman, the partnership was strengthened throughout the year, with the Ombudsman actively engaged in joint advocacy for accelerating the reform of the juvenile justice system and ending the detention of unaccompanied and separated children. The independent assessment of the correctional facilities for children, by the Office of the Ombudsman, brought additional evidence on severe child rights violations in these institutions. Subsequently, the Ombudsman advocated for an urgent review and adoption of a new Juvenile Justice Act. UNICEF Bulgaria supported a capacity assessment of the institution to promote and protect children’s rights and promoted a bilateral exchange with the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children.

In April 2016, Bulgaria hosted a Council of Europe High-Level Conference where the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child was launched. The conference brought together more than 180 participants, including heads of states, ministers and other high-level guests, representatives from national and local governments, parliaments and civil society, international organizations, professional and academic networks, ombudspersons for children, as well as children themselves. UNICEF Bulgaria supported the organization of two special sessions on refugee and migrant children and on child-friendly justice with the participation of the Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner.

The continuous joint advocacy efforts by UNICEF and national NGOs resulted in signing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). As a follow-up, the Ministry of Justice conducted a legal review of the Bulgarian criminal law in light of the standards established by the Istanbul Convention to support the process of ratification and effective implementation.
The Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in June 2016 were reviewed and discussed by representatives of national institutions and UNICEF at the regular session of the National Council on Child Protection and during the second meeting of the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Rights. The National Council of Children provided recommendations for priority actions to be taken by the Government. The Convention on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations served as a basis for the identification of programme priorities for the next country partnership 2018–2022 between UNICEF and Bulgaria.

Television continued to be the most popular medium and instrument for public awareness raising and citizen engagement. In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria implemented three combined communication and advocacy campaigns with three national TV channels—juvenile justice with Nova TV, child participation in the media with Bulgaria on Air, and results for children supporting the UNICEF@70 brand activation with bTV. In parallel, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to place special emphasis on digital engagement to broaden its audience, particularly among millennials.

UNICEF Bulgaria’s high visibility and strong integration between programme, communication and fund-raising contributed to sustaining good results mobilizing financial resources and public support, through engaging individuals and the private sector on child rights. The office further developed its strategic partnerships with the business sector through an integrated approach to corporate engagement, motivating socially responsible companies to go beyond funding and become active advocates for child rights through engaging their employees, customers and business partners.

In the international arena in 2016, Bulgaria continued to be a strong voice for child rights as a co-founder of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs. This involved advocating to place children at the centre of the SDG agenda through the intervention of the Bulgarian President at high-level international forums. In September, the Government approved its second Mid-Term Programme for Bulgaria’s Official Development and Humanitarian Assistance 2016–2019. Through Bulgarian official development assistance, UNICEF Georgia will receive support and funding for the establishment of a day-care centre for children with disabilities. UNICEF Bulgaria and the MoFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs were engaged in a constant dialogue and advice on the international cooperation initiatives.

OUTPUT 1: By 2017, an independent child rights monitoring system, with capacity to regularly collect reliable data on the situation of children, is operating in the country.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Bulgaria supported government and national institutions – the State Agency for Child Protection, the Agency for Social Assistance, Ministry of Justice and National Statistical Institute, as well as civil society and independent human rights organizations to enhance data collection and child rights monitoring.

An assessment of gaps in data related to children with disabilities and children’s access to justice was made with the National Statistical Institute and other relevant institutions. Research, data gathering and analyses in deinstitutionalization, violence, juvenile justice, ECD, and refugee and migrant children provided important information on children in Bulgaria. The Agency for Social Assistance launched an integrated information system with a special module on child protection, which includes detailed information on children at risk and children in vulnerable situations.

UNICEF Bulgaria documented cases of violation of children’s rights, particularly child victims of violence and children deprived of freedom. In partnership with the Bulgarian Helsinki
Committee, UNICEF monitored the situation of refugee and migrant children in detention centres to enhance the assistance to the special needs of children and families, provide counselling and legal aid, and to report violations of human rights.

UNICEF, with the main government counterparts and partners, drafted the Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria in preparation for the new Country Programme Document 2018–2022. The analysis helped identifying equity gaps and priority areas to focus national efforts on, to ensure that more children grow up healthy, educated, protected and confident in their ability to have a fulfilling life.

UNICEF Bulgaria provided assistance to the National Network for Children by improving the quality of their monitoring work. The network developed and launched its fifth ‘Report Card on Child Rights’, assessing the implementation of government commitments to the realization of child rights.

In 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ombudsman institution to strengthen its capacity for independent child rights monitoring and promotion. An independent assessment was performed and provided concrete recommendations to be implemented in 2017. UNICEF and the Ombudsman Office partnered in monitoring the situation of children in conflict with the law and with migrant and refugee children.

**OUTPUT 2:** By 2017 central, regional and local governments have put in place policies and mechanisms ensuring the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in decisions concerning their well-being.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In line with the priorities of the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda on Adolescents – ‘Second decade, Second chance’ – UNICEF Bulgaria promoted the engagement of children and adolescents through awareness raising and advocacy, capacity development and modelling of mechanisms for participation.

In parallel, UNICEF Botswana continued to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations to work collaboratively with children and to provide opportunities for adolescents to be directly engaged and contribute to the development of their local community. With support from UNICEF, the National Network for Children, made up by more than 140 NGOs, formulated and launched its new strategy on child participation and further developed its youth network, Megaphone, which includes young people between the age of 14 and 18. The girls and boys from Megaphone actively participated in the preparation of the fifth Report Card and facilitated consultations with other children.

On 20 November 2016, the second youth forum, ‘Voice It: Opinion that matters’, supported by UNICEF Bulgaria, was held in the National Palace of Culture. The event gathered more than 200 girls and boys aged between the ages of 14 and 18 from all over the country, who discussed the rights of children and their active participation in society. The adolescents also participated in two public discussions – Young Leaders in the Informational Generation and Children and the Media. The National Network for Children learned about good practices and experience shared by 13 NGOs on promoting child participation at local and community levels.

Following the recommendations from the 2015 national consultation with children, UNICEF Bulgaria supported the Ministry of Education with the introduction of child rights education in six schools as an extra curriculum activity through the establishment of UNICEF Clubs,
during the second term of the 2015/16 school year. As part of the initiative, 12 teachers were trained as child rights educators and facilitators of child participation. In addition, 150 students, aged 15–18, joined the UNICEF Clubs and developed a Child Rights Promotion Initiative that reached more than 3,500 children. Part of the club activities were related to the creation of child-friendly spaces in the schools for learning, sharing and cooperation. Based on an assessment of the results, UNICEF Bulgaria updated the content and child rights education methodology and in September, four additional schools were included in the modelling of UNICEF Clubs during the 2016/17 school year.

OUTPUT 3: By 2017, media, NGOs, business, children and adolescents participate in partnerships and alliances for monitoring, advocacy and promotion of child rights.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Bulgaria focused its advocacy and communication efforts on the reform of the juvenile system, prevention of violence, inclusive education, participation, building solidarity with refugees and migrant children and promoting the SDGs.

The juvenile justice campaign, Sentenced Childhood? Justice for Every Child, aimed at sensitizing society about the rights of children in conflict with the law. The joint initiative of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, General Prosecutor and UNICEF, in partnership with Nova TV, coincided with public discussions on the draft Act on Diversion from Criminal Proceedings and Alternative Measures. The campaign included six real-life stories and four public service announcements.

The advocacy initiatives developed by UNICEF Bulgaria to end discrimination against refugee and migrant children were reinforced by the office’s communication channels – mainly Facebook, where dedicated posts were shared regularly. The global initiatives Unfairy Tales and Act of Humanity set a good platform to reinforce the messages. The office continued to work on advocacy and awareness in partnership with Investor Media Group on the importance of taking in account the voice of children and adolescents on all issues affecting them in the family, schools and communities throughout 2016.

Under the umbrella of UNICEF@70, UNICEF Bulgaria supported advocacy and fund-raising campaigns which culminated in a telethon with bTV, ‘Together: For every child’, presenting UNICEF and partners’ results for children through 14 real-life stories of children. More than 100 public influencers (including Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and Kristalina Georgieva, CEO of World Bank) supported the telethon. Some 8,000 people become pledge donors and the messages reached more than 2 million people.

An echo-campaign on ECD with bTV was launched (four children’s stories were broadcast, promoting Inclusive Early Learning). ‘The Beginning of Life’ movie messages reached nearly 600,000 people with 10 public screenings organized.

The UNICEF global violence against children initiative, a 30-minute TV show, was broadcast on the International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women. A series of video stories informing the general public about the support provided by the three Child Advocacy Centres to children victims and witnesses of violence in Bulgaria raised social awareness about violence against children.

The Tiny Stories initiative inspired famous Bulgarian authors, bloggers and others such as Kristalina Georgieva to share their messages for children.

The main Key Performance Indicator results include:
- Traditional media: 65 neutral/35 positive (a positive increase compared with 2015)
- Social media: Facebook, 110,000 followers, 21,489,688 reach/4.44 per cent monthly engagement (a decrease from 2015 when the engagement was 5.4 per cent due to the
number of followers being fewer at 94,761, and a smaller reach of 20,187,054); Twitter has 2,554 followers, a reach of 609,500 and 0.5 per cent monthly engagement (a decrease from 2015 when engagement was 0.8 per cent due to fewer followers at 2,057, and a smaller reach of 190,469. Overall, this means an increased reach of 220 per cent for 2016); Instagram (started in April 2016): 1,068 followers, 5,000 likes; YouTube, views 39,060.

Website: reach 65,084/engagement 25.2 per cent, unique users 80,852.

OUTPUT 4: By 2017, the general public and the private sector mobilize financial resources in support of the most disadvantaged children in Bulgaria and worldwide

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In line with the updated Fund-Raising Strategy 2013–2017 and UNICEF Private Fund-Raising and Partnerships Plan, UNICEF Bulgaria focused its fund-raising efforts on expanding its strategic corporate partnerships and on its monthly pledge giving programme. The funds raised during the year amount to US$ 1,261,798 (BGN 2,241,254), exceeding the annual fund-raising target by 16 per cent (as per the mid-term review revision in June 2015) and reaching a 3 per cent increase compared with 2015.

The income raised from corporate partnerships in 2016 amounts to US$503,262 (BGN 901,088), which represents a decrease of 9 per cent compared with 2015. Customer fund-raising remained a major source of income for the office, with US$235,245 (416,957 BGN) collected during the year.

Special emphasis was placed on maintaining results from corporate engagement and renewing the cooperation agreements with existing private-sector partners. The partnership with Happy was renewed for another year for the minimum amount of US$190,000 (320,000 BGN). The strategic cooperation with Post Bank was extended for two more years and its scope was expanded to include education. In addition, UNICEF Bulgaria supported a wide media and customer fund-raising campaign, launched by Piraeus Bank, to mark the fifth anniversary of the partnership. The partnerships with Giulian Boutiques and BG Menu, launched in 2015, were further developed. The results from customer fund-raising and cause-related marketing with Orange Center continued to grow in 2016. The local partnership with IKEA Bulgaria was expanded in line with the new global fund-raising campaign.

The contribution of strategic corporate partners to UNICEF’s work in Bulgaria was publicly recognized during the live telethon with bTV on 26 November 2016. UNICEF Bulgaria focused on developing and promoting the monthly giving programme for small and medium enterprises, including corporate pathways to pledge through employee engagement. By the end of 2016, 88 companies supported UNICEF Bulgaria with regular gifts.

The income from individual donors amounted to US$ 758,536 (BGN 1,340,166), representing an increase of 14 per cent compared with 2015. UNICEF Bulgaria continued to focus on pledges as a primary fund-raising income stream (56 per cent of the gross income). In 2016, 8,000 new pledge donors were acquired via telethon, media campaigns and direct marketing activities. The office put additional efforts into digital fund-raising campaigns, which led to an 18 per cent increase in online pledge donations.

Monthly contributions from individual donors grew by 35 per cent, totalling US$714,539 (BGN 1,261,135). UNICEF Bulgaria contribution to global regular resources (20 per cent of the pledge) amounted to US$142,908 (BGN 252,227). Increasing the retention rate of existing monthly donors remained a priority. A new donor loyalty programme was launched in 2016, including an online survey on the donor experience. By the end of 2016, UNICEF Bulgaria was supported by more than 33,000 active monthly donors.
One-off cash donations from private individuals of US$ 43,997 (BGN 79,031) represents a
decrease by 68 per cent in comparison with 2015, due to the lack of international emergency
cash appeals in 2016.

OUTCOME 3: Special Purpose

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in
the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 1: Premises and Security

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in
the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 2: Private-Sector Fund-Raising

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in
the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTCOME 4: PCR Support

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in
the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 1: Governance and Systems

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016, the CMT regularly supervised and monitored monthly the correct application of
standards, policies and procedures, as well as the priorities and results established in the
Annual Management Plan and Rolling Work Plan. The CMT approved the Annual
Management Plan, the institutional and programme budgets, the update of the Country
Office Risk Assessment Input Form, and the Country Office Emergency Preparedness and
Response Strategy. The Annual Management Plan and its annexes were shared with the
staff members and consultants in an all-staff meeting, and the CMT minutes were distributed
timely. In October 2016, the CMT also approved a revision of the Annual Management Plan
to reflect the proposed simplification of business processes to ensure better efficiency.

All other Statutory Committees – Convention on the Rights of the Child, PRC, CRB, JCC,
PSB, Learning and Training – met as needed.

OUTPUT 2: Financial Resources and Stewardship

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in
the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.
OUTPUT 3: Human Capacity

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 4: Travel

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 5: Maintenance of Premises

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 6: Communications

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

OUTPUT 7: United Nations Joint Arrangements

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF is the leading United Nations agency in Bulgaria, operating in an environment without the United Nations Country Team.

OUTPUT 8: Staff Welfare

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All recommendations from the 2014 Global Staff Survey have been completed. To address the Career Development recommendation, UNICEF Bulgaria conducted human resources training with the Regional Human Resources Specialist. For the Information and Knowledge Sharing recommendation, the office continued to have regular all-staff meetings, and coordination and programme meetings for planning and information sharing. The management decision to continue the practice of optimized official working hours after the initial trial period had a positive effect on work-life balance.

OUTPUT 9: Equipment

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2016 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.
Evaluation and research

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sequence number</th>
<th>Type of report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of the capacity of the Ombudsman office in Bulgaria in regard to child rights independent monitoring and promotion</td>
<td>2016/003</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Access to Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and analysis of the national legislation in relation to prevention, recognition, reporting, reaction and interventions on violence against children in Bulgaria</td>
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Other publications

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<td>Committee on the Rights of the Child: Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Bulgaria (in Bulgarian)</td>
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<td>Juvenile Justice Reform Advocacy</td>
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<td>UNICEF Bulgaria Annual Report (in Bulgarian)</td>
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<td>Let’s Read Together (in Bulgarian)</td>
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<td>Basic training programme for foster care specialists and teams</td>
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<td>Strengthening of the protection of migrant children in Bulgaria.</td>
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<td>Analysis of legal and administrative barriers to the operation of a coordination mechanism ensuring interaction among institutions and organizations involved in guaranteeing the rights of unaccompanied minor aliens staying in the Republic of Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Effects on children left behind by parents who work and live abroad</td>
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<td>Building Better Brains: New frontiers in early childhood development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Entrepreneurship as an Opportunity for NEETs – young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research on the social norms which prevent Roma girls from access to education</td>
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<td>My Voice Matters Report English/Bulgarian</td>
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Lessons learned

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson learned</td>
<td>Integrated Services for Children Victims of Violence in Bulgaria</td>
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