

REGIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT 2015



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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CEE/CIS)

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Part 1: Overview

1.1 Executive summary

This Regional Analysis Report sets out the achievements of the CEE/CIS Regional Office (RO) in 2015 for the most marginalized children. The region still faces major equity gaps in the realization of all rights for all children, with the poorest children, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities very likely to face exclusion and less likely to be able to access services.

UNICEF continues to transform its engagement in Europe and Central Asia to achieve sustainable results for marginalized children in upper-middle and high-income countries. The focus has been on the reduction of equity gaps through gender responsive programming, stronger programme coherence and robust evaluation and documentation of results. We have engaged strategically in the areas where children are in the greatest need and where UNICEF's work has the greatest traction, giving special attention to the progressive adjustment of our core roles to respond to the region's changing realities. In 2015 UNICEF reinforced its presence in the region to support these ambitions, with RO Bureaux established in Almaty and Istanbul.

One group of children, in particular, required UNICEF's urgent attention in 2015: those caught up in the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. More than 1 million people arrived in Europe by sea in 2015 – at least half of them between October and December 2015 – crossing the Eastern Mediterranean to escape war, insecurity and hardship in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a number of other countries in Asia and Africa. Around one quarter were children, who accounted for a growing share of this large-scale movement of refugees and migrants. In Serbia, children made up 35 per cent of the refugees and migrants crossing the border by the end of 2015, up from 27 per cent in September 2015. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia they accounted for 37 per cent by the end of the year, up from 23 per cent in September.

It is estimated that 30 per cent of those who died at sea in 2015 were children. Children on the move continued to travel without adequate clothing, food, shelter or warmth and were vulnerable to sexual violence and trafficking. Children who made it across the Mediterranean to Europe arrived exhausted, distressed and often in need of urgent medical help, but were increasingly confronted by strict border controls and bureaucratic barriers that blocked their onward journey. The crisis revealed that the European response is not *'fit for purpose'* in guaranteeing the rights of all children, regardless of their origin. The RO, therefore, prioritized the protection and women and children in every CEE/CIS country affected directly by the crisis – Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia – through advocacy, capacity building and service delivery. To date, UNICEF's appeal for \$14,019,135 has raised \$12,069,461: 86 per cent of the target.

The crisis has reinforced UNICEF's universal mandate beyond the countries that have been affected most directly, creating policy precedence for action in Western European countries that are also feeling the

impact. The RO worked closely with UNICEF National Committees in Europe in 2015 to extend support to children and women throughout their journey in Greece, Austria, Slovenia, Germany and Italy. Working with National Committees and partners, UNICEF engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy with Governments and the institutions of the European Union (EU) as the voice for refugee and migrant children in national and regional policy processes to respond to the crisis.

At the same time, the situation in eastern Ukraine remained volatile, despite the ceasefire agreed in September 2015. Some 3.7 million people, including 580,000 children, remain affected by the conflict, including an estimated 100,000 children who live near the frontline. The RO supported the expansion of UNICEF capacities and operational systems in Ukraine throughout 2015, undertaking three support missions to bolster country-level humanitarian action and expanding UNICEF's field presence, including in non-government controlled areas.

While the RO had to devote a significant amount of its time and energy to these crises in 2015, there was notable progress in non-humanitarian areas as the region continued to generate global, regional and multi-country public goods. One prime example was the RO's Multi-Country Evaluations (MCEs), the findings of which were disseminated throughout 2015. These have further informed UNICEF's strategies and equity approaches in the region and have helped to shape the development of Country Programme Documents (CPDs). The common indicators and objectives that have emerged will enhance the future evaluation of UNICEF's contributions.

In response to the MCE on early childhood education (ECE), the RO provided technical assistance to four country offices (COs) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Montenegro – on measuring, monitoring and improving ECE quality. The findings and recommendations were incorporated into 11 new CPDs for the next five years.

As part of the UNICEF HQ/RO Compact on Inclusive Education, the RO is taking the lead on knowledge sharing, global capacity development and innovations, strengthening of existing partnerships and the creation of new alliances, including the alliance with the Global partnership on Education (GPE). In addition, by co-hosting the first International Congress on Developmental Pediatrics in Turkey in December 2015, the RO built on previous efforts to help partners strengthen early identification of children with disabilities and effective responses to their needs.

Important progress was also made on the design of a region-wide Equitable Access to Justice for All Children agenda based on sound evidence. A study on Children's Equitable Access to Justice – the first of its kind in the region – was completed, based on interviews with children, families and professionals. The study was launched at a policy debate in Brussels in June 2015, organized jointly with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and in partnership with the European Parliament Inter-group on Children's Rights.

UNICEF strengthened its partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders within and beyond the region in 2015. Notably, partnerships were strengthened in response to the refugee and migrant crisis with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent family, as well as with the EU and the governments of those countries most directly affected by the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe.

Partnership with the EU, for example, was strengthened through a combination of advocacy, cooperation and resource mobilization activities to influence EU policies in accession, neighbourhood and Central Asian countries to promote children's rights, leverage EU programmes for children and mobilize EU funding. In addition, UNICEF has used its presence in three EU Member States – Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania – to

advocate for child rights ‘from within the EU’. As a result of UNICEF advocacy, alongside the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, access to justice for children was included as a priority in EU policies and funding programmes in 2015 and children with disabilities have received greater policy attention. The European Agenda for Migration 2015 placed particular emphasis on the need to protect children and to follow up on the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014).

Of the four UNICEF evaluations worldwide that received ‘Outstanding, Best Practice’ ratings by the independent Geros system in 2015, three came from the CEE/CIS region. One was the MCE on ECE, and the other two were country-managed evaluations: the Evaluation of the Country Programme of Co-operation between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF 2010-2014; and the Evaluation of Child Care System Reform in Montenegro.

In terms of gaps, one issue dominated in 2015: the need to respond to the refugee and migrant crisis, with many RO staff dedicating their time exclusively to the crisis. In addition, the RO had to provide intensive support to the development of 11 CPDs, which now have to embed standard operating procedures as a result of the UN’s ‘Delivering as One’ approach. Nevertheless, the RO emerged from a difficult year with a number of notable achievements and, in the case of the refugee and migrant crisis, new cross-border partnerships and approaches that could enhance its work in the future.

2015 marked a new era for human development, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs focus on equity, aiming to ensure that everybody – in every country – benefits from progress, particularly those sidelined in the past. As such, they represent a shift from their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Given its long history of engagement and collaboration in CEE/CIS,¹ UNICEF is well-placed to support the pursuit of the equity agenda in a region where most countries are relatively wealthy, but where many children have been left behind by social and economic progress. An assessment of the 11 new CPDs and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) developed in the region in 2015 confirms their close alignment with the aims of the SDGs, stressing the need for equity over the next five years.

1.2 Trends and progress in the region affecting children and women

Economic conditions in the CEE/CIS region varied in 2015. **Economic growth** remained positive across much of the region, and there was marked growth in the Western Balkans, but it was weaker than in 2014. Conflict in Ukraine and political upheavals in Belarus and Moldova contributed to economic contractions in these countries. While many CEE/CIS countries benefited from falling oil prices through reduced oil imports and fiscal subsidies, the exporting countries of Central Asia witnessed falling revenues, and the impact of the weaker Russian economy significantly increased vulnerability in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Caucasus and Moldova saw a 40 per cent decline in remittances from Russia during the first half of 2015², which reduced household incomes substantially among poor households, including a 23 per cent fall in household incomes of the bottom quintile in Tajikistan.³ Significant drops in remittances and the return of migrants

¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

² European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Transition Report 2015-2016 <http://2015.tr-ebrd.com/en/outlook/>

³ Listening to Tajikistan Brief No.1, World Bank.

from Russia, the instability of the national currency and a cold spell in the north of the country have combined to plunge Tajikistan into a crisis.

The volatile situation in Afghanistan continues to pose threats of displacement and refugee influx into neighbouring countries in Central Asia, and the ongoing foreign troop pull-out could lead to the further deterioration of the security situation across the whole sub-region. While there were several reports in 2015 about increased radicalization of young people, men and women in Central Asia, most lack strong factual evidence.

The region continues to face significant **equity gaps** in realizing rights for all children, with the poorest children, children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, and children affected by migration being the most likely to face exclusion and unable to access services. **Gender inequality** continues to manifest itself throughout the region as shown by the unequal access for girls and boys to upper secondary and tertiary education, gender-based and domestic violence, and, in some countries, sex-selective abortions and adolescent suicide (higher for boys and men). Despite the persistence of **child poverty** across the region, countries are still not allocating enough resources towards social protection for children. Coverage of social benefits among the poorest is low and the value of benefits is inadequate, while vulnerable and marginalized beneficiaries face many obstacles to access support.⁴

More than 25,000 HIV positive pregnant women were reported in the region at the end of 2014. In some parts of the Russian Federation, one in every eight young males between 25 and 35 years old is HIV positive and in Ukraine there are reports of dramatic increases in HIV infections in conflict-affected areas. There is an ongoing crisis of HIV infection acquired in hospital by children in Central Asia. HIV and tuberculosis co-infections represent the main cause of AIDS-related mortality among adults and children in the region, and more than 50 per cent of tuberculosis cases among HIV positive patients are multi-drug resistant, representing a major public health threat for the region and beyond.

In 2015, Belarus signed, and Kazakhstan ratified, the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. In 2014 and 2015 Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan presented reports to the **Committee on the Rights of the Child**. Both countries reported progress on a number of areas, with Kazakhstan addressing equity gaps through targeted assistance for children with disabilities and poor families, allocation of resources for early childhood education and enhanced juvenile justice for children. In its Concluding Observations of 10 March 2015 for Turkmenistan, and 30 October 2015 for Kazakhstan, the CRC Committee highlighted areas of common concern: the absence of national strategies and plans for realizing children's rights, and lack of information on (or a comprehensive assessment of), the budget and resources needed for children, especially those who are the most vulnerable. A general **lack of disaggregated data** was also highlighted. In Turkmenistan, the Committee noted **discrimination and inequality, especially against ethnic minorities and girls**, while regional disparities were noted in Kazakhstan. The prevalence of **early and forced marriages** was highlighted, along with child labour. The Committee also registered concern about Kazakhstan's lack of business regulations in relation to human rights and social and environmental standards, and recommended these be established and monitored for compliance.

Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) signed Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs) in 2015 – the first step towards becoming a candidate for accession to the EU. The SAA for Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed in 2008, entered into force in 2015. However, the EU highlighted the need for more work on fundamental issues in

⁴ Social Monitor, 2015 (draft).

the other candidate countries before they can progress further towards EU membership: Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. These included concerns about the prevalence of criminal networks, corruption, lack of protection for minorities including Roma, and the need for the reform of public administration.⁵

In the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, Georgia and Ukraine have made progress in their first year of implementation of the Association Agreements that were signed with the EU in 2014. While many reforms have yet to be completed, the EU has paved the way for visa liberalization with both countries and has moved ahead with the provisional application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with Ukraine. In contrast, the EU has criticized the highly unstable political situation in Moldova, as well as the lack of reforms and the high level of corruption, all of which present obstacles to the effective implementation of the Association Agreements. The EU reinforced its dialogue with Armenia in 2015 (following a cooling of relations in 2014), while relations with Belarus and Azerbaijan remain constrained by concerns over human rights violations, despite greater dialogue. In response to the radical changes that have taken place in the EU's Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood over the past decade, the EU undertook a review of its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2015. The new ENP strategy that is being proposed was presented in November 2015⁶ and focuses on three interlinked priority areas for cooperation to support the stabilization of the EU's neighbourhood: economic development, security and migration/mobility. The EU will pursue flexible partnerships depending on the interests and ambitions of neighbouring countries – EU support will correspond with the level of commitment to reforms by partner countries.

In response to the geo-political shifts in the region, the EU reinforced its relations with Central Asian countries by reviving the position of the EU Special Representative in Central Asia and by strengthening bilateral and multilateral dialogue. In December 2015, the EU and Kazakhstan signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the first new generation agreement with a Central Asian partner country. A revised EU-Central Asia Strategy was adopted by the European Council in June 2015⁷ to strengthen trade and energy links and reinforce cooperation on security and stability while continuing to promote democratization and respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as socio-economic development.

The Treaty establishing the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU/EAEU) came into force on 1 January 2015. The Union, an international organization for regional economic integration, aims to promote free movement of goods, services, capital and labour. The Member States are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation.

1.3 Humanitarian assistance

Many children in the CEE/CIS region faced critical humanitarian needs in 2015 as a result of increasing political, social and economic instability, both within and from beyond the region, and as a result of natural disasters.

⁵ EU Enlargement Strategy Paper, November 2015:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_strategy_paper_en.pdf

⁶ [Joint Communication on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy](#), Brussels, 18.11.2015 JOIN(2015) 50 final

⁷ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/06/22-fac-central-asia-conclusions/>

The **refugee and migrant crisis in Europe** has had an intense impact on parts of the region since mid-2015, particularly the Western Balkans and Turkey, receiving growing numbers of refugees from the Syria conflict. Turkey is now hosting the largest refugee population in the world, with the number of refugees exceeding 2.5 million, including around 1.3 million children. After five years of conflict in Syria and Iraq, and no sign of lasting peace, the refugee population in Turkey is expected to increase still further, adding to the strain on the already overstretched capacities of the Government and partners alike.

A growing proportion of refugee and migrant children and women registered at the borders in southern Europe towards the end of the year. Many arrived exhausted and desperate, having made dangerous journeys, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, but also a number of other countries, in search of safety, security and a better future. According to UNHCR, an estimated 1,015,078 people had arrived by sea in Europe by December 2015, including more than 275,000 children. Women and children accounted for a growing proportion of the refugees and migrants in the last three months of 2015 and children were thought to have accounted for around 30 per cent of deaths at sea in the Eastern Mediterranean (UNICEF/IOM Data Brief Nov 2015).

In all, more than 1 million refugees and migrants entered Europe in 2015 – travelling through Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Countries of destination, such as Germany, Austria and Sweden were seriously challenged by the sudden arrival of large numbers of refugees and migrants, struggling to find adequate accommodation, protection and services for them, in line with national legislation and EU standards. Children making this journey through Europe were exposed to appalling risks including lack of basic food, nutrition, water and sanitation, exposure to cold and winter conditions, and extreme vulnerability to sexual violence and trafficking. Babies, children with disabilities, lost children, stranded children and unaccompanied adolescents were identified as children in greatest danger

A Plan of Action for the management of migration was agreed by the Western Balkan States and the EU in October, and the EU agreed to provide increased humanitarian resources to Turkey to help support over 2.5 million refugees within its borders. However, coordination among EU member states on border management and reception of refugees and migrants remained very challenging, resulting in unpredictable border closures.

Elsewhere in the region, the situation in eastern Ukraine remained volatile, despite the signing of the Minsk II Agreement in February 2015 and the ceasefire agreed by all parties to the conflict in September 2015. According to OHCHR, some 3.7 million people, including 580,000 children, remain affected by the conflict. Of these, an estimated 800,000 people, including 100,000 children, continue to live near the front line, facing daily risks of shelling, mines and unexploded ordnances. Children remain particularly vulnerable, with families exposed to severe hardships as a result of protracted and often multiple displacements and the loss of their coping mechanisms and savings. Child services are under-funded in the self-declared separatist regions of eastern Ukraine child services, capacity is lacking and limited humanitarian access is a continuing challenge.

There was no tangible progress on long-term problems in the Caucasus in 2015, with no resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and continuing concerns about the volatile situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Taliban's temporary take-over of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz, close to the Tajikistan border, in October 2015, underscored the security risks posed to Central Asian countries by tensions beyond the region.

According to Carnegie Endowment (2014), there is increasing alarm over the threat posed by **non-state armed groups** in countries in Central Asia and the South Caucasus sub-regions, a situation that has been exacerbated by high unemployment rates among youth. Continuing high HIV prevalence, risk of infectious

disease outbreaks (such as polio and measles), inadequate access to safe water and challenges related to child development and protection are also contributing to vulnerability, which is in turn heightened during periods of crisis and displacement.

2015 also saw the continuing impact of **climate change** in the region, with melt-water floods and landslides in mountainous areas in Central Asia. In July 2015, mudslides caused by high temperatures and melting snow in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) and Rasht Regions of Tajikistan affected some 14,000 people, half of them children. In November, southern Kyrgyzstan was hit by an earthquake of 6.4 magnitude on the Richter scale, affecting over 6,000 families, many of whom lost their homes. In December, GBO suffered another disaster—an earthquake of 7.2 magnitude which affected over 5,000 people directly, displaced more than 600, including 350 children, and damaged around 140 houses and 15 schools.

1.4 Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Strategic Plan

Alignment of UNDAFs and CPDs in CEE/CIS with the Strategic Plan (SP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The RO reviewed all 11 new CPDs in 2015 and mapped their results against the SP and the SDGs. This exercise found that country offices (COs) have improved the alignment of their country programmes with both the SP and the SDGs. This greater alignment has been facilitated by the emergence of regional priorities within CEE/CIS, known as the Regional Leadership and Knowledge Agenda (RKLA), which have introduced regional coherence and systematic reporting from several countries that share similar administrative and planning systems.

Result reporting at regional level in CEE/CIS. In response to an Evaluability Assessment of the SP in May 2015, which recommended that UNICEF review and adjust output-level indicators to measure progress on the SP, the RO has been collaborating with UNICEF's NYHQ Field Reference Group (FRG) to analyse coherence of indicators from CO to global level. It was also recommended that results reporting at impact and outcome levels be better monitored in the region through the '*Child Rights Monitoring Dashboard*' -- an ambition that is aligned with UNICEF's priority indicators for the achievement of the SDGs. The introduction of a new Scorecard system in 2016 will be an important step towards the consolidation of priority management performance indicators – one of UNICEF's direct responsibilities.

Our work on results reporting has also confirmed one key finding of the Evaluability Assessment: that monitoring the SP will be a challenge unless there is enough flexibility in the plan to accommodate increasingly varied realities within regions and countries. In the next SP, therefore, the RO may consider including only the 'top line' results, some of which may be of global significance, while the rest are tailored to the complex realities of this region. The work initiated by FRG to use the RKLAs for reporting within each region has the potential to generate more systematic and consistent reporting on results for the SP.

SP implementation strategies and CEE/CIS core roles. The Evaluability Assessment of the SP also recommended that the SP be re-oriented in line with its application as a framework. The SP has identified implementation strategies that describe UNICEF's roles in each country in a comprehensive way, based on national development priorities and context. The RO has defined a number of 'core roles' that correspond, very largely, to the SP Implementation Plan, and this has helped to guide CO's programme work, position themselves on the development agenda, and document their unique contributions, both within and beyond their country. In addition, our five completed multi-country evaluations (MCEs) have provided a clear demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses of UNICEF strategies across the region.

The SP has, to date, paid less attention to the assessment of UNICEF's roles and strategies. During the next SP period, it will be important to ensure that these are included in the measurement of results at outcome

and impact level (through the '*Child Rights Monitoring Dashboard*'). This is essential to validate the credibility and plausibility of the link between UNICEF's contribution and tangible results for children.

Multi-sectoral results. Our multi-sectoral focus, covers a range of results for children across several child rights, has proven to be effective since the establishment of the RKLA in 2012. Our focus on Child Well-Being (RKLA 7), for example, which responds to the critical needs of all young children for nurturing and responsive caregiving and safe and stimulating home environments, has contributed to more frequent and effective cross-disciplinary work at the RO and CO level. This evidence-based approach represents a good fit for the region's health systems (i.e. universal and progressive home visiting). High quality regional technical support, combined with collaboration with world-renowned experts, has served as a driving force for the reform of home-visiting systems in a number of countries.

Part 2: Analysis of programme strategies and results: development effectiveness

UNICEF continues to transform its engagement in the region, working to deliver sustainable results for marginalized children in the upper-middle and high-income country contexts (UMICs and HICs) that are, increasingly, the norm in this region and across the world. This is achieved by strengthening programme coherence, focusing on the reduction of equity gaps, evaluating and documenting results, and engaging strategically in UMICs and HICs through a set of Core Roles. Ten results areas were merged into eight in 2015.

The **Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA)** – eight key result areas for children.

RKLA 1: A child's right to a supportive, caring **family** environment

RKLA 2: A child's right to access to **justice**

RKLA 3: A child's right to **early learning**, school readiness and inclusive quality education

RKLA 4: A child's right to be born free of **HIV**

RKLA 5: A child's right to **health** and comprehensive well being

RKLA 6: A child's right to **social protection**

RKLA 7: A child's right to protection from risks of **disasters**

RKLA 8: An **adolescent's** right to a second chance

Taken together, the RKLAs represent a framework for action and knowledge that helps to consolidate UNICEF's strategic shift towards system strengthening and a normative role in the region. This agenda, focused on common results for children, has led to the more efficient and effective use of human and financial resources in UNICEF programming and to the development of broader and more diverse technical networks with partners. This, in turn, has stimulated the generation of rigorous measurement and the better documentation of results and good practices, testing solutions to reach the most marginalized children and leveraging domestic and international resources/partnerships for children in the CEE/CIS.

The CEE/CIS region experienced a range of **emergencies** in 2015 that required the RO to strengthen its own capacity as well as that of several COs in the region, in keeping with RKLA 7 on **children's rights to protection from the risks of disasters**. With the response of European governments not fully '*fit for purpose*' to guarantee the rights of all children caught up in this crisis. In 2015, UNICEF provided active support for governments in countries with children on the move and in destination countries where UNICEF was establishing or strengthening its operational response capacity. In the second half of 2015, the RO Child Protection section dedicated its operations exclusively to Europe's refugee and migrant crisis, taking part in needs assessments missions, designing the Child Protection response in countries without a UNICEF programme and supporting COs in their response. A package of Child Protection interventions is being put in place along the migration route, adjusted to the context and needs in each country. The package includes the setting up of Child Protection standards in reception, transit and accommodation centres, capacity building of front line workers on issues such as determination of best interests of children, strengthening of the national child protection system, improved child rights monitoring, and the establishment of child and family support hubs, jointly with UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The hubs aim to improve the quality, accessibility and predictability of services along the migration route – such as family reunification, information, child-friendly spaces, mother and baby corners, counselling and referral to national services. At the same time, the RO's technical assistance to support UNICEF's response to the wider impact of the Syrian crisis and to the related refugee response included a multi-sector evaluation.

The RO expanded UNICEF capacities and operational systems in Ukraine to support a protracted, complex emergency response. Three multi-sectoral technical support missions spurred actions to bolster country-level humanitarian action, including the establishment of dedicated emergency coordination capacity and a

humanitarian performance monitoring system, the recruitment of dedicated cluster coordinators and the expansion of UNICEF's field presence, including in non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) in eastern Ukraine. As a result of the conflict, more than 8,000 people in the NGCAs who are living with HIV, including pregnant women and children, faced serious risk of interruptions in their life-saving HIV treatment. To prevent these interruptions and the serious public health consequences that would result, UNICEF secured \$3.7 million from the Emergency Fund of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), resulting in the procurement and delivery of a humanitarian supply of antiretrovirals (ARVs) and HIV diagnostics. The RO worked closely with the CO, UNICEF's NYHQ and its Supply Division (SD) to secure the procurement, delivery and safe passage of three humanitarian shipments of drugs and diagnostics, which were delivered to NGCAs in eastern Ukraine, amounting to almost 95 per cent of the supplies needed to ensure that people living with HIV could continue their treatment. UNICEF's remarkable capacity to deliver in this complex environment has been highly praised by the GFATM and all partners.

The RO also continued to provide technical, coordination and leadership support to COs implementing disaster-risk reduction (DRR) interventions in the region. The RO led the successful organization of a Regional DRR Knowledge Management workshop in November 2015, involving government counterparts (mainly representatives of Ministries of Emergency Situations and Ministries of Education), NGO partners and sister UN agencies.

In October 2015, UNICEF and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hosted a training event in Minsk to introduce the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Emergency Response Preparedness and Plans for 2016-2017. Regional staff continued to provide coordination and leadership to countries in the Central Asian and South Caucasus sub-regions that were implementing the Multi-Country DRR Programme, co-funded by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). Regional staff also provided technical support to national education counterparts from [Armenia](#) and [Kyrgyzstan](#) to help them present their examples of best practice at global meetings. Significant technical assistance was also provided by the RO on **Education in Emergencies** to the [Turkey](#) and [Ukraine](#) COs, resulting in the development of major funding proposals and significant mobilization of additional resources. The RO also provided remote support to a number of COs that had to respond to smaller-scale emergencies, such as landslides and earthquakes in [Tajikistan](#) and floods in [Georgia](#).

The RO strengthened emergency readiness across the region, including through a regional humanitarian evaluation training involving child rights monitoring staff and country emergency focal points. The First Line Responders Roster, a critical regional surge mechanism, was updated to allow the rapid deployment staff with emergency experience in the region. Given the heightened emergencies and risks in CEE/CIS, dedicated emergency meetings focused on lessons learned and reviews and planning were organized for CO Representatives, Deputy Representatives and Operations Managers. A number of UNICEF emergency staff benefited from training in conducting evaluations of humanitarian action.

In 2015, the findings of the MCE on RKLA 1, **children's right to live in a supportive and caring family environment** confirmed the need to prioritize support to families and move towards a clearer transition from institutional to community-based care. It highlighted the need to change the mind-set of professionals and end the stigmatization of children with disabilities. Major progress was achieved in improving policy and legislative frameworks, introducing new services and changing the way services are standardized. Changes were implemented in financial flows and budgets to provide financial space for new services to be taken up in the public budget. There were also changes in the governance and quality assurance of child-care systems to ensure better coordination, decision-making and quality assurance processes and mechanisms. The MCE also found that positive changes happen when there is political commitment to address the issue. In 2016, mechanisms will be put in place to measure the impact of reforms on specific groups of vulnerable children, such as children with disabilities, children under the age of three, children who face discrimination as a result

of their ethnicity and children who are victims of violence. Strengthening support for the development of social work will also be prioritized.

2015 also saw important progress on RKLA 2: **children's rights to access to justice** as a result of the evidence-based design of a regional agenda on Equitable Access to Justice for All. The MCE on the impact of juvenile justice reforms on children was completed, confirming the contribution of UNICEF in reducing the number of children in pre- and post-trial detention by almost 60 per cent between 2006 – when most of the Juvenile Justice reforms started in the region – and 2012. The evaluation team considered that UNICEF's focus on decreasing detention rates and length of detention made an indirect contribution to narrowing the equity gap in juvenile justice. These results were discussed, validated and disseminated at roundtables with counterparts from several CEE/CIS countries, as well as at international fora such as the World Congress on Juvenile Justice. Findings and recommendations from this MCE and the Children's equitable Access to Justice Study (see Section 3.1) were used to develop a regional Theory of Change, including benchmarks and indicators, to be finalized in 2016.

On RKLA 3: **children's rights to early learning and school readiness**, and in keeping with the management response to the recommendations of the MCE on Early Childhood Education (ECE), the RO provided technical assistance to four COs – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Montenegro – to measure, monitor and improve ECE quality. The findings and recommendations of the MCE were incorporated into 11 new CPDs for 2016-2020. In addition, the findings were disseminated and follow-up actions were discussed at a number of national level roundtables, in-country conferences and internal UNICEF meetings. Presentations were also made at international conferences, including one organized by the International Step by Step Association. In partnership with the Open Society Foundations and the Roma Education Fund, the RO supported the preparation of two Roma Early Childhood Inclusion reports for Croatia and the Czech Republic. Finally, with the assistance of European experts, a vision and strategic directions for ECE in the region were outlined in '*A Fair Start*', which provided the basis for a regional ECE Theory of Change to frame UNICEF support to quality education and early learning in the CEE/CIS. This was followed by the development of a Theory of Change for RKLA 3 on a child's right to inclusive quality education, which will be a key planning reference for education programming at country-level and inform country-based education theories of change to support inclusive education and learning.

On RKLA 5: **young children's rights to comprehensive well-being**, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Young Child Wellbeing, including international experts from different sectors, came together at an annual meeting. The TAG also provided support to country teams working to advance young child well-being through home visiting and early identification and intervention for young children with developmental difficulties. In 2015, additional experts from the region joined the TAG to ensure its regional ownership and relevance. The TAG also provided final inputs to two major regional capacity development tools – the '*Regional Recommendations for Home Visiting for Young Child Wellbeing*' and '*Supporting Families for Young Child Wellbeing: Resource Modules for Home Visitors*.' A regional training of trainers was conducted in Serbia on the home visitor resource modules, attracting 40 experienced national trainers from 13 countries. By the end of 2015 several countries were already using this training to develop plans to collaborate with each other on the translation and/or adaptation of the resource modules into national languages and to design trainings to integrate the modules into pre- and in-service nursing education programmes.

The RO assisted COs with leadership to support progress on RKLA 8, **children's rights to social protection**, throughout 2015, concluding with the development and validation of a regional strategy for realizing this right. Analytical work on child poverty and social protection systems was completed, and a revised Theory of Change was developed, together with a common framework for monitoring. Several interactions with COs included the sharing of experiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as discussions on the

Social Protection Floor with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

On RKLA 5, **children's rights to be born free of HIV**, the RO provided technical support to Ukraine for an assessment of the situation and risks faced by adolescents, as part of the '*All In*' global UNICEF initiative to stop adolescent AIDS. The Ukraine CO also received RO support to facilitate agreements with the Government on the procurement and optimization of ARV treatment for people living with HIV. Care providers and policy makers from Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan benefited from high-quality technical support to improve the quality of care for children and adolescents living with HIV, through their participation in regional technical seminars organized by the RO in collaboration with European experts.

To support RKLA 8, **adolescents' rights to a second chance**, the RO organized the regional meeting on '*Working with adolescents to realize their rights and build on their strengths and resilience: Second Decade - Second Chance*' in November 2015, bringing together 65 participants, including senior UNICEF representatives and adolescent experts from NYHQ, the RO and 15 COs in CEE/CIS, plus 14 external experts. The meeting was a milestone in the work on RKLA 8, as it sharpened technical knowledge on adolescents among UNICEF staff, gave participants a unique opportunity to share key areas and features of UNICEF's work in this area, and enabled participants to identify strategic areas of future engagement, based on the Core Roles of UNICEF in the region. The meeting was built around the two pillars of RKLA 8: (1) strengthening the resilience and well-being of adolescents and the realization of their rights through the development of quality services across the health, education and child/social protection sectors; and (2) strengthening the engagement with adolescents as partners and agents of change to build more equitable, respectful and inclusive societies. The focus was on 'strengths-based' approaches to adolescent work, presenting the latest scientific thinking in key fields and providing opportunities to share relevant experiences from COs.

Part 3: Analysis of programme strategies and results: global and regional programme

3.1 Influencing global/regional discourse and policy

The region continued to generate global, regional and multi-country public goods in 2015.

A study on ‘Children’s Equitable Access to Justice’, the first of its kind in the region, was completed, launched and disseminated. Based on interviews with children, families and professionals, the study shows that most children whose rights are violated never seek redress and know little about their rights or where to seek help. Deeply entrenched social beliefs and patterns make it unacceptable for children to confide in an adult outside the home and judicial and administrative procedures are rarely adapted to children. The study was launched at a June policy debate in Brussels, organized jointly with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and in partnership with the European Parliament Inter-group on Children’s Rights. A policy advocacy brief was prepared and shared in relevant EU fora, stressing the need to address children’s access to justice, as this lies at the core of three of the main regional and global agendas: human rights, rule of law and sustainable development. There was also dialogue with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee on the Right of People with Disabilities. The dissemination of key messages from the study was enhanced by an advocacy video produced with the Mental Disability Advocacy Center in Bulgaria, in which children with mental disabilities and their families describe their struggles and successes in the search for justice. This was widely disseminated at events and through social networks. Similarly, a series of one-minute junior videos produced by children was produced and disseminated.

Advocacy efforts, training events and the regional mapping of services for **young children (aged 0-3 years) with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties** has resulted in the increased engagement of COs in efforts to reduce inequities in this area. The *first International Congress on Developmental Pediatrics* in December 2015, co-hosted by UNICEF, was attended by more than 50 UNICEF focal points and partners from public and private sectors. At a special UNICEF session, participants agreed on the need for a regional network of advocates and practitioners to strengthen work in this area. This reinforced the foundations for UNICEF sub- and intra-regional collaboration on building capacities to serve young children with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties, and led to further RO engagement with partners to address the needs of the region’s most vulnerable and invisible group of children. This event, together with orientation courses at the Developmental Pediatrics Department at Ankara University, have helped partners to strengthen early identification and community-based and family-centred approaches that are compatible with a psychosocial – rather than medical – approach.

The RO produced significant knowledge and programme guidance on **out-of-school children (OOSC)** and inclusive education in 2015. Following up on the technical workshop on OOSC Monitoring held in Bucharest in 2014, in which 12 countries participated, the RO collaborated with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) to finalize a *‘Monitoring Framework for Out-of-School Children and Children at Risk of Dropping Out’*. This guide to improve data and information systems on OOSC aims to enhance the evidence base for national and local policy making and response. It informed the joint UNICEF/UIS report on the global Out-of-School Children Initiative *‘Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All’* launched in January 2015 and its key concepts and overall approach were adopted in the joint UNICEF/UIS *‘Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual’*. This work is being complemented by a handbook, *‘Enrolling All Children in School and Preventing Dropout: Policy and Practice Pointers for the ECA Region’*. This second volume of programme guidance on OOSC presents a wide range of country-level best practices, from the region and beyond, on policies and interventions for education inclusion and dropout prevention, as well as on responses at key ‘risk points’ in the educational cycle (the points at which dropout or non-enrolment are most likely).

The RO also developed an important set of resources on inclusive education. A series of 14 webinars and 14 Companion Technical Booklets on Inclusive Education were produced and published globally in collaboration with UNICEF's Education and Disability Sections of HQ Programme Division, within the framework of a first HQ/RO Compact in Education. Recognizing the critical importance of teachers and teaching in inclusive education, and in response to demands from many COs, the RO also engaged with the Zurich Pedagogic University to develop an *'Inclusive Education Teacher Preparation Toolkit'*. These global knowledge products build on five years of work in the region on the inclusive education for children with disabilities and children from ethnic and linguistic minorities. They aim to introduce UNICEF CO staff, and government counterparts and development partners to the issues around inclusive education for children with disabilities and other excluded children, giving them the arguments, evidence and good practices they need to initiate or strengthen national dialogue and advocacy for inclusive education.

As a result of these contributions and the overall work carried out in the region over the past five years on this issue. UNICEF's 2015 Global Education Team Meeting and Global Disability Network Meeting confirmed the leadership of the RO in the HQ/RO Compact on Inclusive Education. As a result of its lead role, the RO is now steering the following activities: (1) global sharing and dissemination of the knowledge products generated on inclusive education; (2) contributions to global capacity development and innovations on inclusive education; (3) strengthening existing partnerships on inclusive education and creation of new alliances with global actors/stakeholders, including the Global partnership on Education (GPE).

As part of the region's multi-country work on validating progress towards the **elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV**, the RO worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS to co-organize a Regional Technical Consultation on progress and challenges towards achieving EMTCT in April 2015 in Astana. This led to a comprehensive situation analysis and generated country commitments and agreements on next steps to validate progress on EMTCT. The RO also organized a sub-regional consultation for adolescents living with HIV and care providers to improve the quality of care and psychosocial support and build better services for HIV-positive adolescents.

The RO worked closely with WHO/EURO and served on the steering committee of the **Ministerial Conference on Life-course Approaches to Health**, which brought together Ministers of Health from both Eastern and Western Europe in October 2015. Participation in this Conference was highly visible in political terms and was very useful for programming as UNICEF was able to influence the outcome statement in favour of an approach that looks at health and well-being outcomes from a life-long perspective, as well as inter-generationally. This allowed for UNICEF advocacy on the importance of investing in care and well-being during pregnancy, in the early years and during adolescence as the best way to ensure long-term and positive health outcomes for children and adults throughout the life cycle.

The RO contributed to the **Regional Financing for Development Consultation** in March and influenced the outcome document on the need to invest in children and promote social protection and inclusive societies. This was aligned with UNICEF's global key messages for the Financing for Development Conference of July 2015. A Working Group on Social Protection Floors for the Europe and Central Asia region was established under the Regional Directors' Team of the UNGD-R ECA, thanks to the leadership and cooperation of UNICEF, ILO and UNDP. The Working Group aims to support coordinated country work through the development of a results-oriented joint vision at the regional level, technical support, and knowledge sharing.

The RO represented UNICEF for the first time at a session of the **Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)**, organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna in preparation for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the World Drug Problem in April 2016. The session was an

opportunity to share UNICEF experience in the region on complex issues around drug use during pregnancy and among adolescents. The debates highlighted aspects related to human rights, health and social protection of children and families affected by drug use, and stressed the need to work with the most disadvantaged and marginalized populations and promote preventive measures, as well as enabling and safe environments.

The RO also participated in the **Global Forum on Innovations** in Finland in November, highlighting CEE/CIS experience on addressing HIV risks among adolescents through interactive technologies.

3.2 Evaluation and research, and data

Three of the five **MCEs** that used Monitoring of Results for Equity System (MoRES) as their analytical framework were completed and uploaded in 2015. The management responses for the first two MCEs on quality inclusive education and early learning and school readiness were also prepared and uploaded in 2015. These evaluations received **highly satisfactory and outstanding good practice** ratings respectively. This major effort is the result of a compact between COs, the RO and NYHQ (Evaluation Office and Programme Division). This approach to the conduct of evaluations through an equity lens was promoted at the global UN Evaluation Group Evaluation (UNEG) Practice Exchange event in New York in March 2015). The MCE findings have been presented at a number of country-level roundtables to staff, Government and partners – and to meetings of the Regional Management Team (RMT) in May and October 2015. The MCEs have generated important opportunities to present UNICEF's equity agenda and to highlight both the achievements and challenges ahead for the reduction of equity gaps in the CEE/CIS region. The MCEs have informed UNICEF's strategies and equity approach in the region, shaping CPD development in 2015.

An evaluation of UNICEF's **Young People's Media Network** Initiative was completed in 2015 and the management response was uploaded. The results are informing UNICEF's new regional youth and digital advocacy initiative, funded by the UNICEF National Committee for Germany.

The RO, in collaboration with UNICEF's Evaluation Office and the Turkey CO, commissioned an evaluation of **UNICEF's L3 Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Turkey**. The evaluation was designed to feed into the Turkey CPD and contribute to broader evaluative exercises, including a sub-regional evaluation of UNICEF's response and a system-wide multi-agency synthesis exercise. The evaluation report has been approved and uploaded and, as of 12 May 2016, the management response was in draft form.

Of the four UNICEF evaluations worldwide that received a rating of outstanding, **best practice** from the independent Geros system in 2015, one was the MCE on Early Childhood Education, and two were country-managed evaluations: the '*Evaluation of Country Programme of Co-operation between Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF 2010-2014*' and the '*Evaluation of the Child Care System Reform*' in Montenegro.

Seven of the 10 evaluations and studies that were planned for 2015 were completed during the year.

In 2015, the RO published the '**Compendium of promising practices to ensure that children under the age of three grow up in a safe and supportive family environment.**' The Compendium brings together examples of successful initiatives and innovations across the CEE/CIS region to accelerate efforts to keep families together, prevent young child abandonment and relinquishment. In the framework of the Call to Action from UNICEF and the OHCHR to end the placement of children under the age of three in institutional care and prevent the separation of children from their families, the Compendium shows that significant progress is being made across the region in the sectors of health, education, and child and social protection. It sets out promising paths, strategies and practices that can address issues of equity in the lives of children and offers policy-makers and professionals an overview of relevant resources used by governments and non-

governmental organizations. It aims to support countries in accelerating national child-care reform processes.

Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICSs) undertaken in 2014 were finalized and disseminated in 2015 through full reports, key findings, infographics, animated videos and country-level presentations and workshops. The surveys include the MICS on general population and Roma settlements in [Kosovo \(UNSCR1244\)](#), as well as the MICS in [Kyrgyzstan](#). In 2015, two MICS were launched in [Kazakhstan](#) and in [Turkmenistan](#), where tablet-based data collection was used for the first time in a MICS survey in the region – a move that is expected to generate more ‘real time’ data and shorten the amount of time taken to produce a final report. Data analysis of the MICS in the Transnistria region of [Moldova](#) continued, with the report expected to be finalized in the first quarter of 2016. Specific surveys and multi-country analysis on **Roma populations** resulted in a number of important products, particularly ‘*The Rights of Roma Children and Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia*’, with the full version available at http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/21352_UNICEF_Roma_Woman_web_V2.pdf.

Other important efforts to strengthen the capacities of national governments and partners to collect and use data on children included a training workshop, co-hosted by UNICEF and the Washington Group (WG) on **Disability Statistics**. This brought together more than 100 participants from national statistical systems and organizations representing people with disabilities and aimed to familiarize participants with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), a new conceptual framework for disability that focusses on function, and new survey tools for the more reliable measurement of disability prevalence among children and adults through household surveys. The workshop was followed by more proactive efforts by partners and COs to work inter-sectorally to align data collection systems with the spirit of the UNCRPD. Final field-testing of the WG/UNICEF module on child functioning was initiated in [Serbia](#) ([http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/1_children_with_disabilities_LR_v.8.2_\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/1_children_with_disabilities_LR_v.8.2_(1).pdf)). The CO in [Kazakhstan](#) completed a Situation Analysis on Children with Disabilities, which will inform its advocacy and inclusion approaches.

Two studies by COs in the CEE/CIS region (selected from 99 studies submitted by UNICEF offices around the world) were selected as **Best of UNICEF Research 2015**:

- **‘Education in Romania: Investing in the future’** examines the level of spending on education and training and highlights the way in which weak institutional arrangements affect the Roma population disproportionately in terms of educational access. The research was commended for demonstrating how research can be combined with an advocacy approach, arguing for budget increase, and providing a comprehensive policy toolbox that covers all aspects of the economy of education.
- **‘Violence in Serbian Schools: Bullying and Beyond’**, drew attention to neglected issues (i.e. school bullying) and was commended by the review panel, which noted that its main value lay in its conceptualization and measurement of robust and context-relevant indicators of violence in Serbian schools, rather than the benchmarks used in global studies.

A number of other COs had notable achievements in this area in 2015.

- The [Georgia](#) CO launched a data portal – a national-level one-stop shop of child-related data. This presents an opportunity for other countries to develop similar universal, full-scale and technologically advanced data portals on child-related statistics. These can be aligned with international standards and methods in data collection and analysis to monitor **child rights and progress towards the SDGs**, as well as national programmes.

- The Turkey CO supported the Government in institutionalizing a database (called YOBIS) for gathering **real-time educational data on Syrian students and teachers** – an example of a middle-income country strategy in a humanitarian crisis that provides a solution to key bottlenecks in the data system for educational administration. This is expected to contribute to the improvement of the education for refugee children through evidence-based policy making.
- In relation to the **refugee and migrant crisis in Europe**, the COs in Serbia and other affected countries are rolling out IT innovations to enable real-time monitoring of the situation of refugee and migrant children. The aims are to better track changes and trends in the state of these children, to strengthen government capacity in data collection and to enhance the quality of data on children.
- The CO in Croatia, in cooperation with the Government, commenced the development and operationalization of the **Child Well-being Index** in 2015.

The independent evaluation by the Programme Office in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) of its assistance to Child Rights Monitoring Systems by Kosovo Institutions (2009-2015) will provide critical lessons for all countries in the region, and could inform strategic adjustments around UNICEF's increasingly important Core Role on **Child Rights Monitoring**. Capitalizing on the good partnership and sharing of information around MICS, data on selected indicators of **TransMonEE** were shared officially by the Turkmenistan CO, marking the country's return to the TransMonEE process after an absence of eight years.

The analysis of the results of efforts by CEE/CIS COs to undertake research, studies and evaluations (RSEs) was simplified in 2015 with the introduction of an online RSE planning and tracking system. Of the 181 RSE activities planned for completion in 2015, 100 had been completed and 80 knowledge products uploaded as of 12 May 2016. To strengthen the region's evidence generation function, the RO developed workflow and guidance/procedures in 2015 for the conduct of RSEs, established a pre-qualified consultants' roster, mapped academic organizations and think-tanks in the region, and developed a **Monitoring and Evaluation CEE/CIS Team Site** to enable the better sharing of norms, standards and good practices.

An extensive **health system assessment** in Kazakhstan and a **formative evaluation** in Bosnia and Herzegovina provided valuable inputs to countries on how to strengthen their models and established approaches before embarking on extensive system reforms and the scaling up of improved home-visiting services.

3.3 Implementation strategies

In 2015, UNICEF strengthened its **partnerships** with a wide range of stakeholders across the region, including UN agencies, regional bodies, and the Governments of European countries most directly affected by the refugee and migrant crisis. Partnership with the EU was strengthened by combining advocacy, cooperation and resource mobilization activities to influence EU policies in Accession, Neighbourhood and Central Asian countries so that they promote children's rights as well as to leverage EU programmes for children and mobilize EU funding for UNICEF programmes. An additional objective has been to use UNICEF's programme presence in three EU Member States in the CEE/CIS region – Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania – to advocate for child rights 'from within the EU'.

As a result of UNICEF advocacy with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, access to justice for children was included as a priority in EU policies and EU funding programmes, and children with disabilities have also received increased EU attention.

Child rights have also been integrated systematically into **EU policy and programming processes**: the Association Agendas for [Georgia](#), [Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#) include paragraphs on child rights; annual EU Progress Reports for enlargement and neighbourhood countries now include stand-alone chapters on child rights; and European Parliament resolutions have highlighted key child rights issues. In addition, EU Human Rights Dialogues with [Armenia](#), [Georgia](#) and [Moldova](#), have included child rights as separate agenda items. Joint UNICEF advocacy with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and PPD Brussels helped to put **young people** at the centre of the new European Neighbourhood Policy, which promotes inclusive social development, education and skills, resilience, conflict prevention and the protection of refugee and migrant children. Capacity building events on the integration of child rights into EU programming were organized for the network of human-rights focal points in neighbourhood and enlargement countries, while high-level launches and workshops for the EU-UNICEF '*Child Rights Toolkit*' were organized with EU Delegations, government and civil society partners in [Belarus](#) and [Moldova](#).

Our partnership with the **Council of Europe** has also been intensified, with UNICEF making an active contribution to the drafting of the **Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021**. Cooperation was also strengthened with the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, who highlighted key child rights issues during his country visits and in his statements.

Partnerships were also strengthened in the context of the **refugee and migrant crisis in Europe**. This included partnerships with UNHCR and the Red Cross and Red Crescent family in the programmatic response across the migration routes, and with UNHCR, IOM, OHCHR and the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children (ENOC) on data about children and advocacy for the protection of their rights. UNICEF's global advocacy helped to raise EU awareness about the high number of children affected by the refugee and migrant crisis and their protection rights and need for support, and the EU provided significant funding to UNICEF for the response.

The RO worked with with the **Paediatric European Network for the Treatment of AIDS** and Infectious Diseases (PENTA-ID) and the Republican AIDS Center of the Russian Federation Ministry of Health to organize a **horizontal technical exchange seminar** in November 2015 in Kazan, Russian Federation. The seminar, which examined care and support for children, adolescents and families affected by HIV, attracted more than 120 service providers caring for children and adolescents living with HIV from [Russia](#), [Uzbekistan](#) and [Western European](#) countries and was a key opportunity to share state-of-the-art knowledge to improve quality of care and strengthen professional networks of care providers. The seminar was preceded by an eight-week online learning course.

The RO provided technical support to Azerbaijan within the framework of the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** to host an international conference on Ending Child Marriage, which produced a declaration on enhancing legal, policy and programme responses in countries affiliated with the OIC. While there were no specific opportunities for regional partnerships with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2015, these remained important fora for sub-groups of countries in the region. The possibility of further regional and country-level partnerships may be explored in 2016.

The RO continued to engage with international financial institutions (IFIs), particularly the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, on three areas of common interest – WASH, education and health – and to look at innovative financing for UNICEF-supported programmes. With support from PPD, several COs in the region explored models that will allow UNICEF to receive funds from IFIs – something that is hampered at present by institutional constraints on both sides.

Our partnership with **ILO and UNDP** was strengthened in 2015 through the establishment of the **Working Group on Social Protection Floors** for the Europe and Central Asia region. A work-plan for 2016 will focus on the development of a results-oriented joint vision at the regional level, technical support to UN Country Teams (UNCTs) working jointly on social protection, and knowledge sharing on how to operationalize the concept of a social protection floor in the region.

The year also saw the continued use of **horizontal cooperation** as a key strategy, facilitated through the RKLAs. The practice of *Integrated Social Services System* in Armenia was found to be relevant for a number of countries in the region and the CO enabled the Governments of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to learn about Armenia’s experience at a one-week residential workshop. The lessons learnt from the visit were used by the participants to design their own strategies and programmes on integrated social protection systems. Delegations from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan visited Tajikistan to share their experiences at a national conference on Tajikistan’s future social protection strategy.

To promote the development of a **Juvenile Justice Law** in compliance with international standards, UNICEF organized an exchange visit of a delegation from Georgia (headed by the Deputy Minister of Justice) to Albania, offering Albanian legal professionals an opportunity to learn about Georgia’s recently adopted Juvenile Justice Code and prepare a joint strategy to make the case for a similar Code in Albania. The Azerbaijan CO facilitated a visit by representatives of the Ethiopian Government, civil society and Salt Producers Association to exchange experience and learn from Azerbaijan’s universal **Salt Iodization Programme**. The Croatia CO continued to strengthen its support to Croatia’s beyond-border engagement for the rights of children worldwide. An international conference co-organised by the CO with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports shared Croatia’s model and best practice in the area of **prevention of peer violence**.

3.4 Normative principles

The RKLAs established a regional strategy for UNICEF to achieve results for children by 2020, grounded in human rights principles. The Human Rights-Based Approach, for example, is operationalized by prioritizing support to awareness-raising and evidence around social protection for children and their families.

The RO and its 21 offices are implementing the **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** by focusing on the four GAP target priorities and through gender mainstreaming. All areas of the GAP were included in the region’s 11 new CPDs in 2015, with the exception of support to access to water and sanitation at home, which is not an active programme area for the majority of COs. Of the 21 offices in the region, many have adopted gender mainstreaming strategies. In addition, COs have gender-responsive programming to support national development strategies and engage with UNCT partners to address issues of particular relevance to the region’s UMICs and MICs. The Table below shows COs’ alignment to the GAP and additional gender mainstreaming strategies that are relevant to the regional context.

Country and Programme Office	Ending child marriage (8)	Advancing girls’ secondary education (10)	Gender-responsive adolescent health (11)	GBViE (5)
Albania		Roma communities	x	
Armenia	X			
Azerbaijan	X	Sports for development		
Belarus			HIV	
Bosnia and	X		HIV	

Herzegovina				
Bulgaria	X	x	Teen pregnancies	
Croatia				x
Georgia	X	x		
Kazakhstan			x	
Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)		x	HIV, STI, Teen pregnancy and VAW/G	x
Kyrgyzstan			WASH	
Moldova			YFHS	
Montenegro				
Romania		x		
Serbia	including Roma communities	x		x
Tajikistan		x		
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	including Roma communities			
Turkey	including Syrian communities	x		x
Turkmenistan			Anaemia prevention, HPV vaccine	
Ukraine			HIV	x
Uzbekistan		x	KAP survey	

RKLA strategy notes, theories of change and child monitoring indicators are being reviewed to incorporate gender analysis that will pinpoint the gender disparities that reflect the systematic exclusion and structural discrimination experienced by women and girls. The RO has also identified where opportunities for boys and young men are diminished, or gender stereotypes are reinforced, as a result of economic marginalization and negative social norms. A draft Gender Regional Strategy Format is being discussed and will be reviewed for adoption at the 2016 Regional Management Team (RMT) Meeting, which should accelerate COs' efforts to align their work to the UNICEF GAP.

The RO has developed a **Light Gender Assessment (LGA)** methodology to support CEE/CIS countries that are undergoing a Mid-Term Review (MTR) or developing their UNDAF or CPD. Four CEE/CIS countries – Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Serbia and Uzbekistan – completed a LGA exercise between March and December 2015. The methodology has fed into discussions around the Global Gender Review, which is under development, and will be adapted for assessments in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey in May 2016. As part of the Turkmenistan Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) review, a GAP profile was completed to highlight how the CO will close equity gaps and achieve gender equality through programming in adolescent health, child marriage, violence against women and advancing girls' secondary education. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, and Armenia ensured the GAP strategy implementation was taken into account as part of the CPAP development process.

The implementation of **gender-based violence (GBV)** prevention and the response to GBV in Emergencies (GBViE) – one of the four priority GAP pillars – were strengthened in 2015. The IASC GBV Guidelines were distributed to gender focal points to ensure that they had the most up-to-date tools to inform programme development in their countries. The draft UNICEF GBViE Programme Resource Pack and Rapid GBV

Assessment Tools were field tested in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia as part of the response to the **refugee and migrant crisis**. In line with its emergency response plan, the Croatia CO led the Inter-Agency Working Group for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence established at the refugee and migrant reception centre in Slavonski Brod. In 2015 the action by this Working Group – included the training of 58 social workers and other frontline workers to better assess and address the potential risks of GBV at the reception centre. With stronger technical training, implementing partners were able to establish safe and confidential referral mechanisms to support survivors. GBViE was also a priority for the Turkey CO in its Syria response programming. Together with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the CO trained 428 key actors from government and civil society on child protection in emergencies, while 403 individuals were trained on GBViE, helping to strengthen coordination between government, UN and NGO actors in the response to sexual and gender-based violence.

Ending child marriage is an emerging area of work, in alignment with the implementation of GAP in the region. Child marriage programming in CEE/CIS focuses on marginalized groups such as the Roma or migrant and refugee communities. Currently, the COs in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey have active programming to address child marriage. The Azerbaijan CO provided technical support to the Government's State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs to host an international conference on '*Ending Child Marriage*', which adopted the Baku Declaration for enhanced legal, policy and programme responses in countries affiliated with the OIC. There are emerging opportunities for exchanges between countries in the region and those involved in the Global Programme on Ending Child Marriage, which will be developed further in 2016.

The RO is working with CO gender focal points to develop a Regional Strategic Framework for implementation of the GAP. As noted in the table above, in addition to implementing programmes on GBViE and ending child marriage, a number of COs are implementing programming aligned with RKLAs 3,4, 6, 7 and 10 to support gender-responsive adolescent health and girl's access to secondary education.

Given the specific needs and programme modalities of countries in the region, it is important to mainstream gender-responsive programming to inform action on gender equality in education, including through early childhood development and school readiness programming. In addition, UNICEF offices in the CEE/CIS region have integrated gender into disaster-risk reduction (DRR) and access to justice – areas that may not be reflected *specifically* in the 20 indicators in the SP or GAP to track progress on the broader integration of gender in programming, but that are very relevant to our region. Finally, several countries are contributing to gender-responsive legislation and policies through MICS data collection and analysis and by contributing to reporting and monitoring in relation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights instruments.

Part 4: Management

4.1 Management and operations

The RO's accountability for governance, oversight, quality assurance, technical assistance, advocacy and strategic engagement – under the Outcome 800 Support-Management – is coordinated through a number of RO and CEE/CIS Regional Committees, which provide advice and support to the Regional Director to ensure that the RO delivers on its accountabilities. The Terms of Reference and composition of these Committees are reviewed and updated annually – in 2015 these were finalized as part of the Annual Management Plan (AMP).

The RO continued to promote cross-office arrangements in 2015 to better manage risk and to improve efficiencies, particularly in offices with limited operations staff. These arrangements have included in-country or programme office transaction processing centres: Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) (Pristina for Zvecan); Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek for Osh); Kazakhstan (Astana on behalf of the RO presence in Almaty); Turkey (Ankara on behalf of the RO Bureau in Istanbul – August 2015) and Ukraine (Kyiv for three newly established Zone Offices in March 2015 in Donetsk, Mariupol and Kramatorsk, in addition to the existing Office in Kharkiv to support the country's emergency response). In Georgia, all VISION transactions were deployed to the staff in the Sokhumi Zone Office as a result of an internal audit recommendation.

UNICEF's programme of mentoring and peer reviews, which is coordinated by the RO, was further strengthened in 2015. There were 13 on-site support missions provided to four offices, including the RO. As a result of the vacant posts in the RO's Operations team (two) and in Human Resources (two), the RO had to rely on stretch assignments from the region to support the routine work of these two sections, as well as for the three Programme Budget Reviews (PBRs) held during the year. In addition to on-site support, COs began to support each other off-site, taking advantage of technology to, for example, participate in candidate interviews. COs continue to help each other on Vision-related issues and receive welcome support from IT-Common Services/Geneva.

The Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC) is an overall management priority, with the RO supporting its strategic intent to relieve COs from routine, time-consuming transactions, aiming to promote efficiency and effectiveness. Office operations managers have been appointed as team leads in the COs for the transition to the GSSC. Three operations managers in the region were deployed to support the preparation for the GSSC in Budapest, and to help design and test the standard operating procedures with the GSSC Team in NYHQ. All COs in the region started to prepare for the transfer of transactions to the GSSC and this transition was one of the topics discussed at the Deputy Representatives and Operation Managers (DROPS) meeting in November 2015.

Two offices were audited in 2015: Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), with the final report released in November, and Tajikistan (report is still in draft format). Five COs fully closed all audit action points from previous years' audits. Two COs still have open audit action points from previous years: Turkey (one open recommendation on full implementation of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) and working in coordination with the other UN agencies), and the RO (six open recommendations, of which one is high priority). The RO is working closely with OIAI to have these open recommendations closed as soon as possible: the RO sent several updated status reports to OIAI in 2015 (16 March, 1 June, 3 September) and a final one was sent on 29 January 2016, with a follow-up reminder from the RO on 22 February. The Turkey CO sent its updated status report to OIAI on 25 February 2016. Two COs reported that they monitor the audit recommendations after being closed to ensure compliance and no deviations have been reported as a result of the random checks.

The RO continued to **monitor CO and RO programme and operations performance** through regular follow ups with COs and regional advisors, which resulted in significant improvements in the implementation rates of programme activities and fund utilization. However, given the introduction within Vision/InSight of performance scorecards at global level, the RO will redesign its *Monthly Monitor Report* to ensure robust quarterly monitoring of the key performance indicators that are clearly linked to the corporate performance scorecards. This new *Monthly Report* will include priority Indicators, such as (1) core resources management (allocation and utilization), (2) donor reporting, (3) grants expiring, (4) Direct cash transfers, (5) audit observations, and (6) gender, among others. During the meeting with all Deputy Representatives and Operations Managers, there were several sessions to orient and discuss the corporate performance scorecards.

Operations teams across the region have provided reliable and timely support in **budget utilization, HACT compliance, Human Resources (HR), staff morale, security, the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and emergency risk assessment**. The teams were also instrumental in ensuring that results-based governance systems are in place and functional. Country Management Teams (CMTs) function as a platform for risk management, monitoring programme priorities as stipulated in the AMPs, identifying potential risks, and addressing them through mitigation measures. In addition, operations teams continued to support their COs in monitoring programme developments, the implementation of rolling work-plans (RWPs), budget expenditure, grant expiration and the submission of donor reports. Management indicators were often monitored using InSight, specifically the *Management Dashboard* and *Management Reports* and many COs have taken the initiative of building capacity of all staff on managing performance for results (MP4R), results-based management (RBM), ethics, integrity, and gender mainstreaming.

The RO followed up on the 2014 **HACT Action Plan** to guide COs on the full implementation of HACT and compliance with the revised procedures, particularly by strengthening assessment, assurance, monitoring, regional oversight, and consolidated reporting, as well as developing credible partnerships with Supreme Audit Institutions at the CO level. As a result, all COs have assurance plans in place and completed the HACT status report in 2015, and all COs are using the FACE form for cash transfers (except Uzbekistan). Overall, the region has met the minimum requirements for programmatic visits and spot-check requirements. FRG has noted, officially, that the region has made significant improvement in the conduct of programmatic visits and audits, and has exceeded the minimum annual requirements.

The **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** Section in Geneva continues to support the region as a whole, and the RO. In 2015, the region continued to be at the forefront for the evaluation and implementation of strategic solutions provided by ITSS. It has also been recognized that CEE/CIS has been a 'pilot' region for testing the new technologies in the field. This is the result, in particular, of the high level of its technical workforce and the good quality inputs provided from COs in the region. As part of the LIGHT infrastructure project, five COs were migrated to the Regional Service Centre in Geneva and their staff have assisted other COs with the insights and knowledge gained from this experience. The region has significant potential at all levels of ICT services, as seen throughout ITSS.

ICT staff have provided support to global services with part-time staff serving to full-time capacity to develop global solutions, some of which have been adopted at the global level. In 2015, a number of IT colleagues from the region provided support for the building of ICT infrastructure and services at the GSSC in Budapest. The region also provided inputs to UNICEF's global IT policies on, for example, the website security policy, and the region has implemented the recommendation of the website security audit to safeguard UNICEF's brand and protect supporter information.

As part of its **effectiveness and efficiency** initiative, UNICEF CEE/CIS analysed the ICT function in its 21 COs in 2015. Data has been collected from COs on the percentage of time spent on key IT activities and on the risks posed by outsourcing and/or offshoring these activities. This has provided key inputs for the Technical Review Team and PBR process that helps to determine staffing structures at the country level.

One main challenge is that **the RO does not have a dedicated regional IT function**. The Head of IT services in Geneva reports to the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, so the RO and the region's 21 offices must share IT support with a large number of stakeholders based in Geneva i.e. PFP, Emergency Operations (EMOPs), Geneva liaison office outposts, etc. Whilst the Service Level Agreement (SLA) of these services are being discussed, the ITSS could help to guide the sustainability of such a support model.

In terms of **supply management and procurement services**, CEE/CIS had lower procurement services in 2015 than in previous years, and also as compared to other regions. An increase is expected in 2016 as a result of

the refugee and migrant crisis. The total amount of procurement reported for the region is \$4.03 million, with the main items consisting of vaccines, syringes, cold-chain equipment, safety injection supplies, antiretroviral medicines, and premix for flour fortification. Services from Supply Division were always rated as high quality, with timely delivery. The role of the COs in procurement was mainly one of facilitation and collaboration between Supply Division and Ministries of Health, and assistance with ordering, customs clearance and the settlement of financial accounts. A new Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNICEF and the state distribution of vaccines and pharmaceuticals in [Kazakhstan](#).

The RO continued to use the corporate credit cards introduced in 2013 for the **online procurement of airline and train tickets**. This has saved money when buying tickets from low-cost carriers and for train journeys, long-haul flights and business-class travel. The RO looks forward to receiving finalized guidelines from the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) in 2016 on the use of credit cards for different types of procurement in addition to travel.

4.2 Global Staff Survey

This Section was sent separately to DHR.

Evaluations, research, studies, surveys and publications completed in 2015

Evaluations, research and studies					
Title	Year	Sequence number	Type	Theme	Management response, for evaluations, (y/n)
An evaluation of the Young People's Media Network Initiative Increasing young people's capacity to advocate for child rights through media in CEE/CIS	2015	2015/001	Evaluation	Youth participation	Y
Children's Equitable Access to Justice: Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro)	2015	2015/002	Study	Justice for children	N/A
The rights of Roma children and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia: a comparative review and further analysis of findings from MICS surveys in Roma settlements in the three countries	2015	2015/003	Study	Inequity analysis by ethnicity	N/A
Social Monitor 2013: Social Protection for Child Rights and Well-being in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia	2015	2015/004	Study	Analysis of social protection	N/A
Child's right to a family environment: Multi-country evaluation of results achieved through child care system reform 2005-2012	2015	2015/005	Evaluation	Child care reform	N
Multi-country evaluation of the impact of juvenile justice system reforms on children in conflict with the law	2015	2015/006	Evaluation	Juvenile justice	N
Progress in Reducing Health System Bottlenecks towards Achieving the MDG 4 Goal: Multi-Co-Evaluation of UNICEF Contribution in 5 CEE/CIS Countries	2015	2015/007	Evaluation	Health	N
Roma Early Childhood Inclusion: Croatia Report, 2015	2015	2015/008	Study	Social Inclusion	N/A
Roma Early Childhood Inclusion: Special Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care, Czech Republic, 2015	2015	2015/009	Study	Social Inclusion	N/A

Publications				
Title	Audience	Authors	Quantities	Estimated cost
<i>The Rights of Roma Children and Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia: a comparative review and further analysis of findings from MICS surveys in Roma settlements in the three countries</i>	Policy-makers and regional stakeholders	Principal author Aniko Bernat Overall development and review: Siraj Mahmudlu, UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist; Elena Gaia, UNICEF Policy Analysis Specialist; Ana Abdelbasit, UNICEF consultant	Online publication	??
<i>Compendium of promising practices to ensure that children under the age of three grow up in a safe and supportive family environment</i>	Policy-makers and regional stakeholders	Nela Krnic-Brkovic	Print publication	\$19,800
<i>Children's Equitable Access to Justice in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia</i>	Policy-makers, regional stakeholders, national authorities in Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Montenegro	International Development Law organization Produced under the direction of Anne Grandjean, Regional Child Protection Specialist	Print publication (500 copies) and online publication	\$155,000 (including cost of evaluation)
<i>14 Booklets on Inclusive Education with a focus on Children with Disabilities</i>	UNICEF staff and partners	Paula Hunt	Online publications and webinars	\$150,000