REGIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT
2014

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

GENEVA, MARCH 2015
Part 1: Overview

1.1 Executive summary
The 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2014 highlighted both the progress made in the CEE/CIS region¹ towards the universal realization of children’s rights and the remaining challenges. This Regional Analysis Report sets out the achievements of the Regional Office (RO) for CEE/CIS in 2014, a year when the RO continued to provide leadership on an equity agenda spanning UNICEF’s core roles: advocacy as an independent voice for children, high-level technical assistance, support for the exchange of good practices and knowledge across countries and regions, robust monitoring and evaluation, innovative communications to promote child-friendly social norms and partnership-building.

Transformed engagement with partners within and beyond the region will continue to guide UNICEF advocacy in CEE/CIS to support and protect the most vulnerable children so that no child is left behind.

UNICEF engagement centred on equity, focusing on children left behind by the average progress of recent decades, including children from the poorest families, children without parental care, children from minorities, children with disabilities or HIV/AIDS, and children affected by gender inequalities. UNICEF also supported children affected by the humanitarian crises that touched the region in 2014, including around 800,000 Syrian refugee children now living in Turkey, 1.7 million children caught in the conflict in Ukraine, and thousands affected by flooding in south eastern Europe.

Measuring UNICEF’s contribution to results for children

The inequities confronting children are the focus of the common priority results for children selected by the region, the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA), which are based on the UNICEF Strategic Plan contextualized to the region. The RKLA was conceptualized in 2012 as a multi-country approach to 10 common result areas. Since 2013, the RO has mounted a series of five multi-country evaluations (MCEs)² backed by a rigorous quality assurance system involving HQ, which will be disseminated in 2015. Each MCE assessed the impact of the narrowing of equity gaps in a number of countries achieved through national systems changes over recent years. The MCEs also assessed UNICEF’s contribution to this impact and to the reform processes and proposed recommendations to drive systemic change for children in the future.

Findings from the MCE on a child’s right to a supportive and caring family environment highlighted a 10 per cent decrease in the number children under three years of age placed in institutions in the region since the 2012 “Call to Action on the right of children to grow up in a family” was launched in Bulgaria. However, efforts to develop alternative care have been more successful than efforts to prevent separation: some children and families remain ‘hard to reach’ or have been ‘left behind’ by positive

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¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Moldova, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
² The MCEs cover: RKLA 1: A child’s right to a supportive and caring family environment; RKLA 2: Access to justice for children; RKLA 3: A child’s right to early learning; RKLA 4: A child’s right to education: Including all children in quality learning; and RKLA 5: A child’s right to health: a promise renewed.
reforms. The MCE on juvenile justice found that the number of children in detention – many of them already vulnerable – had fallen by almost 60 per cent between 2006 (when juvenile justice reforms started) and 2012, and the number of children diverted from judicial proceedings – a key UNICEF focus – almost doubled. The evaluation team found that UNICEF’s focus on reducing rates and length of detention had helped to narrow the equity gap in juvenile justice, reaffirming the impact of UNICEF’s broader engagement on access to justice. The MCE on a child’s right to early learning found that more children aged 3-6 years have access to such education. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, annual enrolment increased by 89 per cent of the total preschool population between 2005 and 2011. Equity gaps have narrowed as more children with disabilities enrol in school, but they still face barriers to pre-schooling. The MCE on including all children in quality learning found that net enrolment rates in primary education have increased or stabilized in the five countries evaluated. Gender disparities have narrowed in primary education enrolment, as has the gender gap on progressing to lower secondary school.

The findings from this series of five MCEs on the most important bottlenecks to the achievement of child rights for ALL children are driving country programme document (CPD) development3 across the CEE/CIS region. The evidence that has been generated is informing our prospective work and sharpening our focus on equity, as well as that of our partners in the region, through ample dissemination and debate at regional and global level.4

The RO and the Office of Research explored stronger UNICEF engagement with academic and think-tank institutions in 2014. The aim is to generate better evidence on the situation of children, improve knowledge on bottlenecks and inequities that prevent equitable development for children, and to ensure that efforts to document what works to reach the most vulnerable children are well designed and rigorous. In 2015, efforts will be made to connect with such institutions in upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) and high-income countries (HICs) in the region where stronger research capacities exist, and to explore twinning with Western institutions.

**Leveraging innovations, opinions and resources for children**

High-level advocacy in 2014 included follow up to the Regional Ministerial Education Conference on inclusive education, co-organized by the RO and the Government of Turkey in 2012, with three technical events: (a) a joint UNICEF/OECD seminar on learning outcomes; (b) a study tour in the Netherlands on early school leaving; and (c) a technical workshop in Romania on monitoring out-of-school children. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia and Turkey will now benefit from expertise from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for education sector reviews, participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018, and the development of learning assessment systems.

Substantial progress was also made on the Call to action on the right of children to grow up in a family, launched in 2012 in Bulgaria, which resulted in a 10 per cent decrease in the number of children under three years of age placed in institutions in the region. In September 2014, members of the Executive

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3 Half of the 22 countries in the CEE/CIS region are preparing new CPDs for submission to the Executive Board in 2015.

4 A series of regional and country level roundtables are underway to discuss MCE recommendations with UNICEF staff, government and partners. In March 2015, the RO will lead a discussion at the UN Evaluation Group, Evaluation Practice Exchange on the approach and methodologies used to evaluate progress for children through an equity lens.
Board and key stakeholders were informed of several specific country experiences to accelerate horizontal cooperation and accelerate joint action.

The re-focus on equity also triggered the creation of a Regional Working Group on Inclusion and Gender Equality and identified external allies, including the European Union and private sector companies, as partners to promote the rights of Roma children.

As the crisis escalated in Ukraine, the RO provided strategic, operational and substantive support for the Country Office (CO) to conduct needs assessments, emergency response planning, inter-agency coordination, resource mobilization, communication and public advocacy, all of which resulted in the substantial scale up of UNICEF’s operations in Ukraine. In Turkey, the RO continued to support UNICEF’s regional Syrian refugee response, providing strategic guidance, on-site technical support, surge capacity and support for emergency response programming. The RO’s strong on-site technical assistance to COs helped to prevent polio importation from Syria and Iraq (maintaining the region’s polio-free status) through six supplementary immunization campaigns in Turkey.

Moving forward with transformed engagement and evolving partnerships

The evolving positioning of UNICEF in UMICs and soon-to-be HICs is forging ahead. In Croatia, as mentioned, UNICEF has developed a self-financed programme model that works with the State in policy reform and with civil society and private sector actors. Findings of the 2014 Mid-Term Review revealed that this model contributed to a 37 per cent reduction in the number of children in residential care between 2010 and 2013. Children outside Croatia have also benefited through fundraising (including $700,000 to the global organization in 2014) and the sharing of Croatia’s experience with other countries in the region. In Croatia, as in Romania and Bulgaria, the evolving partnership has been framed in the context of EU membership, with the dual aims of leveraging resources for children and influencing EU policies on child rights.

Emerging experiences in Turkey and Kazakhstan are also paving the way for UNICEF in the region and beyond to shape its partnerships with UMICs that are approaching the HIC threshold. The RO is working pro-actively with COs in both countries to define an agenda that will engage governments for children beyond borders, to support the realization of children’s rights regionally and globally. In particular, work has advanced in the humanitarian partnership between Turkey’s Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and UNICEF, with the aim of formalizing a stand-by partner agreement in 2015 as a first step. Evolving work in Turkey and Kazakhstan will be supported by the establishment of RO presences in Istanbul and Almaty in 2015. The mandates of these RO ‘bureaus’ will include the identification, evaluation, and horizontal sharing of good practices, innovations, and institutional expertise in selected thematic areas, and the leveraging of new partnerships with civil society, academia, youth organizations and the private sector across the region.

While CEE/CIS governments remain UNICEF’s primary partners, the RO is building stronger collaboration with international organizations, other UN agencies, civil society, academia, the media and – increasingly – the private sector. With the European Union and the Council of Europe, the RO advanced the child rights agenda on four fronts in 2014: consolidating child rights as part of the EU accession and neighbourhood process; influencing EU and Council of Europe child rights governance and policies; advocating for the rights of the most disadvantaged children, and leveraging and mobilizing resources from these partners. UNICEF also partnered with WHO Europe to shape the Regional Child and...

This report highlights good news on resources, showing progress on our efforts to place the spotlight on children made invisible by average progress in the region: the RO’s Resource Mobilization Action Plan was approved by the Regional Management Team (RMT) in October. Other Resources (OR) trends continue to be positive, with a significant increase of OR income for CEE/CIS from $69 million in 2010 to over $105.8 million in 2014 (as of January 2015), with a significant increase OR for Emergencies (ORE) for Turkey and Ukraine in 2014. Nonetheless, ORR increase is also significant, from $60.7 million in 2010 to $69.9 million in 2014. The top resource partners for UNICEF in the region are the European Union, the United States, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Austria. Several National Committees continue to support the region and funds are also being mobilized increasingly through various UN mechanisms, including joint programmes.

Horizontal cooperation is becoming more systematic and more widespread in the region

Promoting and supporting horizontal cooperation has become a key feature in the region, with over 50 such initiatives taking place in 2014. The most noteworthy include the development of new policy frameworks, strategies and regulations, the development of demonstration models based on the positive assessment of services or programmes in other countries, the adoption of new tools, guidelines and curricula, the creation of new mechanisms or working groups to tackle key child rights issues, and the increased knowledge and capacities of professionals. Significant inter-regional exchanges included those with Latin American countries, with Brazil sharing its experience with Armenia on the integration of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. CEE/CIS countries have benefited from know-how and expertise from European states e.g. Estonia, Netherlands, and Norway and has supported countries from other regions, notably in Asia and North Africa. The Government of Kyrgyzstan, for example, hosted a delegation from the Nepalese Constitutional Assembly that focused on the development of child rights policies, which resulted in Nepal initiating amendments to its legislation to align it more closely with international standards. The Government of Romania shared its good practices in the area of child-care reform with Tunisian officials, resulting in strengthened capacities of Tunisian child protection authorities and an interest in continued knowledge and experience exchange between the two countries.

In November 2014, over 150 multi-sectoral government officials, representatives of civil society, and experts from 19 countries in the CEE/CIS region gathered in Minsk, Belarus at the Regional Conference on Strengthening Child Protection Systems to Protect Children from Neglect, Abuse, Exploitation and Violence. This high-level conference fostered a greater political commitment towards the development and strengthening of national child protection systems in the context of the regional social development challenges and priorities.

Shaping the future with organizational structures that are ‘fit for purpose’

The RO fully supports the strategic intent of the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) to relieve the COs from routine, time-consuming transactions in order to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. The RO conducted an in-depth review of staff workload related to transactions that could be moved to the GSSC to ensure, as far as possible, that the transition to GSSC is implemented with little disruption to the continuity and quality of COs’ support to results for children and without any reduction in the coverage and quality of our risk management and oversight practices. This has been a great help to the
Regional Programme and Budget Review (PBR) in its review of CO submissions to address the shift of transactions to the GSSC. The CEE/CIS Region is very engaged in the roll-out exercise to ensure that added tasks, including translations, scanning, etc. do not reverse potential opportunities for efficiencies at the CO level.

1.2 Trends and progress relevant to children and women

The context

There has been great progress for children in Europe and Central Asia since the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The 25th anniversary of the CRC in 2014 offered an extraordinary opportunity review the achievements of the region towards the universal realization of children’s rights, and to assess the remaining challenges. Since UNICEF began its programmes of cooperation with several countries of the region more than 20 years ago, CEE/CIS countries have seen positive transformation in governance, the rule of law and human rights, which have all contributed significantly to the progressive realization of children’s rights. However, while all countries in CEE/CIS, except Tajikistan, are now MICs or HICs, significant disparities and the uneven realization of children’s rights across the region remain pressing challenges. Children placed in residential care, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, children with HIV-AIDS, children living in poverty, and girls and boys affected by gender inequalities are often being left behind by progress and are not benefiting equally from improved living conditions and better access to services and opportunities.

Since the global financial crisis in 2008, the CEE/CIS region has witnessed an uneven pattern of poverty reduction: while some countries continue to show poverty in decline, others are experiencing increasing poverty. When considered against thresholds that reflect the higher living costs in the northern hemisphere, poverty levels remain disturbingly high in the region, even in some UMICs. Poverty and extreme poverty among children increased in 2014 in Armenia, while coverage of the recipients of family benefits remained static. However, Eurostat data published in 2014 indicated that the percentage of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion decreased slightly in 2013 compared to 2012 in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania.

A generally bleak economic outlook in the region is likely to make it even more difficult to reduce equity gaps any further in the coming years. Economic growth in Europe and Central Asia is estimated to have slowed to 2.4 per cent in 2014 compared to 3.7 per cent in 2013, driven by a hesitating recovery in the Euro area and stagnation in the Russian Federation.5 While it is too early to predict the scale of the impact, the sharp depreciation of the Russian ruble (by 50 per cent in 2014) is likely to deepen the recession in the Russian Federation. This can have negative consequences for Central Asian economies, for which the Russian Federation is the largest source of remittances: the sharp decline in the ruble has forced currency devaluations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The conflict in Ukraine took a severe toll on the economy, with output estimated to have contracted by around 8.2 per cent in 2014. The tensions between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and the associated economic sanctions, the possibility of prolonged stagnation in the Euro Area, and sustained commodity price declines were – and will remain – key risks for the region.

5 World Bank, Global Economic Prospects, Europe and Central Asia, January 2015
http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/GEP/GEP2015a/pdfs/GEP2015a_chapter2_regionaloutlook_ECA.pdf
The number of Syrians refugees hosted by Turkey surged in 2014 to reach 1.65 million: 222,000 were accommodated in camps, the remainder within the host communities. Over half of the refugees are children, who are often excluded from education and who often lack protection. UNICEF backed Turkey’s response both with emergency supplies and with technical support in education, child protection, nutrition and health, paying close attention to Syrian children in host communities as well as those living in camps.

Across the region, the most vulnerable children and families, who generally face multiple forms of deprivation, continue to be the focus of UNICEF engagement. In line with UNICEF’s core roles in MICs and UMICs, dynamic partnerships – with media, the corporate sector, academic institutions and civil society partners – will be at the centre of UNICEF strategic positioning to build national momentum and pressure to ensure respect for all rights of all children in the CEE/CIS region. Strengthening horizontal learning and knowledge sharing across countries and documenting emerging good practice and lessons will be prioritized to advance results for children, and to clearly demonstrate the impact of UNICEF’s work, particularly in UMICs and HICs.

UNICEF’s response

In this complex regional context, UNICEF engagement in HICs, those that are about to become HICs and UMICs will continue to evolve and diversify. In Croatia, UNICEF has developed a self-financed programme model that is contributing to measurable results for children through strong engagement with the state in policy reform and through diverse and dynamic partnerships with a wide range of civil society and private sector actors, including citizen supporters. In concrete terms, UNICEF’s work in Croatia contributed to a 37 per cent reduction in the number of children in residential care institutions and a 15 per cent increase in the use of family-based care alternatives from 2010 to 2013. Children beyond Croatia’s borders have also benefited through fundraising (including a contribution of $700,000 to UNICEF’s global resources in 2014) and through the sharing of Croatia’s expertise and good practice with other countries in the region.

Emerging experiences in Turkey and Kazakhstan are illuminating the potential for our future partnerships with UMICs and HICs. There is strong interest from the Turkish Government in forging an ongoing partnership with UNICEF after the country achieves HIC status, continuing the work for Turkish children, but adding a regional and global dimension to our partnership for child rights. To further this ambition, an updated Basic Cooperation Agreement has been developed that will cover the national, regional and global dimensions in one comprehensive legal framework for partnership with the Government, which could become a model for other countries approaching HIC status.

A Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Albania’s human rights commitments took place and recommendations were issued to the Government, while the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued concluding observations for Croatia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation on their adherence to the CRC. The CRPD6 Committee reviewed the reports from Azerbaijan, the CEDAW7 Committee reviewed Georgia and Kazakhstan, and the CERD8 Committee examined the reports from Kazakhstan, Montenegro, and Uzbekistan.

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6 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
7 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
8 Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
Across the CEE/CIS region, UNICEF is moving ahead as the broker between private sector and public service in corporate social responsibility, with some COs implementing the Child Rights and Business Practices handbook developed by UNICEF, encouraging businesses to maximize their positive effects and minimize their negative impacts on children. Bulgaria used the communication channels of the Postbank to promote the importance of early childhood development (ECD) – a campaign that generated more than 500 media items and a one-month media partnership with five radio stations. Moldova initiated a partnership with Moldcell, a national mobile network with more than one million users, to reach parents with messages on health issues, child development, and non-violent parenting to help them to adopt better child-rearing practices. This partnership will be fully rolled out in 2015. The largest chemical producer in world, BASF, partnered with UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia, after widespread floods struck south eastern Europe, to set up child-friendly spaces, refurbish preschools, and to provide psychosocial support and effective referral mechanisms.

UNICEF made major progress on strategic advocacy and public communication in 2014, with timely and high-quality communication packages for digital and mass media channels helping to mobilize high-level policy influencers, youth and community leaders. UNICEF advocacy consolidated positive media trends on such issues as the right of children to grow up in families, inclusive education and access to justice. As a result, over 6,000 media articles – overwhelmingly positive – were published or broadcast on national media across the region. Top-tier international media outlets (including CNN, The New York Times, AFP, Reuters, and BBC) reported on the situation of children caught up in the crisis in Ukraine, the floods in south eastern Europe, and the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey, as well as UNICEF’s support.

The region joined the global CRC@25 celebrations with Armenia, Georgia, Montenegro, and Moldova organizing ‘Activate’ TED-style talks with prominent change makers. There were parliamentary and media roundtables across the region, and strong support for the #IMAGINE global song campaign and other public events. Eleven countries in the region strengthened their multiyear ‘glocal’ campaign on ending violence against children, with Georgia making good use of social data and multimedia approaches. Romania’s social change video reached 9.7 million people and a related fundraising video was seen by 7.9 million people on 16 channels.

Croatia and Turkey continued to contribute to the Global Communication Strategy Reference Group, sharing experiences on the development of communication partnerships in MICs, while nine more COs have signalled their readiness to join the next phase in 2015. Albania, Belarus and Uzbekistan launched their social media channels, which means that every CO in the region now has an active presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and/or Vkontakte. Over 500,000 people are being reached, representing an increase of 20 per cent from 2013. Media monitoring systems will be further boosted in 2015.

Over the past year, UNICEF has sought to strengthen its relationships with organizations and institutions that produce data, research and analysis related to children. Many COs have established work plans with national statistical offices (NSOs) and are strengthening their capacities to produce credible and useful data on children. In Turkey, for example, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education to collect real-time data on children in schools. In Romania, an innovation to collect better data on vulnerable children – and more quickly via tablets and an online platform – has been tested with the NSO and is now being scaled up to improve the targeting of social services.

The RO and the UNICEF Office of Research began a dialogue in 2014 on strengthening UNICEF engagement with academic and think-tank institutions to generate better evidence in the region on the
situation of children, improving knowledge on the major bottlenecks standing in the way of equitable development for children, and to ensure that efforts by UNICEF and governments to document successful models to reach the most vulnerable children are carefully designed and employ rigorous methodologies. In 2015, particular efforts will be made to reach out, in particular, to knowledge entities in UMICs and HICs in the region where stronger research capacities exist – and to look at twinning opportunities with ‘Western’ institutions.

1.3 Humanitarian assistance

In Ukraine, the events in Crimea in March 2014 and the ensuing fighting between government forces and opposition groups in eastern Ukraine forced more than one million people to flee their homes within the country, while over 600,000 people have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly the Russian Federation. Those who have stayed behind continue to face major security risks that have forced children and their families to live in bomb-shelters and that have disrupted basic services, including the provision of water and electricity. Humanitarian access remains challenging and constrains the flow of relief aid to affected populations, especially in non-government controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk. Ceasefire attempts, notably the Minsk Agreement of September 2014, have not succeeded in bringing an end to the armed conflict and prospects for peaceful resolution remain bleak.

Syrian refugees continue to flee into Turkey as the crisis in Syria continues unabated, with no end in sight. A new wave of refugees poured into Turkey in September 2014 following the advancement of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the region. The influx of refugees continues to affect other countries in the region, including Bulgaria and Armenia.

The security situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has worsened with an increase of skirmishes at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, diminishing hopes for a peaceful settlement of the disputed territory.

The situation in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia also remains a major concern. Tensions in Ferghana Valley continue to make life difficult for citizens in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, while new threats keep emerging in border areas as a result of limited natural resources. A number of security incidents in the border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have created tensions between communities and governments on both sides. The continued volatile situation in Afghanistan, particularly following a significant withdrawal of international security forces, continues to pose threats of displacement and refugee influx into neighbouring countries in Central Asia, as well as security threats and the rise of radicalization.

Disasters associated with natural hazards in the region are increasing in both frequency and severity, driven by such factors as climate change, urbanization and migration. The region is highly prone to major earthquakes, floods and associated mudslides, avalanches, storms and extreme winter weather. The earthquake that hit northern Kyrgyzstan in November 2014 damaged over 2,500 homes, causing families and children to look for new shelter during freezing cold conditions, while flash floods in April 2014 in Tajikistan took the lives of eight children. The year witnessed the biggest humanitarian crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the 1992-1995 war, with massive floods and landslides across one third of its territory affecting an estimated 1 million people, as well as 1.6 million people in neighbouring Serbia, which lost 3 per cent of its GDP.

1.4 Equity case study
At the regional level, results achieved for the most vulnerable and excluded children – and the system-level factors that have either facilitated or impeded these changes – were documented rigorously and systematically in 2014, through a series of five RO-led thematic multi-country evaluations (MCEs). The MCEs, now largely completed, are contributing to an equity refocus throughout the region, in particular through the operationalization of the recommendations in the 11 country programme documents (CPDs) that are under development.

**Multi-country evaluations themes**

1. A child’s right to a family environment.
2. Achieving juvenile justice system reforms on children in conflict with the law.
3. Increasing access and equity in early childhood education.
4. Including all children in quality learning.
5. Progress in reducing health system bottlenecks towards achieving the MDG 4

As of January 2015, the two MCEs related to early childhood education and quality learning have been completed, the MCEs related to child protection (a family environment and juvenile justice) are in final draft report stage, and the final MCE on health is at the analysis stage. Some initial highlights from the first four MCEs are presented below – followed by a brief description of next steps. The full evaluation reports, executive summaries, and video interviews with the Evaluation Team Leaders are all available on request.

**Main conclusions emerging from the countries included in the four independent multi-country evaluations conducted in the CEE/CIS region on equity gap reduction**

There has been a noticeable decline in the rate of children in residential care and an increase in those in alternative care. However, the efforts of professionals and policy makers on the development of alternative care have been more successful than efforts to prevent separation. In all of the countries covered by the evaluation, the entire child care system is perceived by beneficiaries as more child-friendly and it was found that there are more checks and balances than before. However, particular groups of children and families remain ‘hard to reach’ or, in some cases, have been ‘left behind’ by the positive changes. As a result, some ‘equity gaps’ may have even grown in some of the countries evaluated during the reference period. Children with disabilities, in particular, remain at risk of exclusion and too many continue to live in inappropriate institutional care. In some of the countries evaluated, some ethnic minority groups, notably Roma, are at risk of being over-represented in the care system.

**The number of children in detention (pre- and post-trial) fell by almost 60 per cent** between 2006 – when most of the juvenile justice reforms started in the region – and 2012. During the same period, the number of children diverted from judicial proceedings – one of UNICEF’s main focus in the reforms – almost doubled, meaning that these children received support outside the justice system. However, the reduction of the length of pre-trial detention was rather uneven during the period, perhaps because this area received relatively less investment. Disaggregated data that would allow an assessment of whether these results have benefitted all children, including the most vulnerable, were not available. The Evaluation Team, however, considered that it was likely that children from vulnerable groups faced a disproportionate risk of being arrested and detained – and therefore that UNICEF’s focus on decreasing detention rates and length of detention contributed indirectly to narrowing the equity gap in juvenile justice.
An increasing number of children aged 3-6 years have access to early childhood education. The numbers are impressive: in Kyrgyzstan, the annual enrolment increased by 89 per cent of the total preschool population between 2005 and 2011. In several countries, the increases are actually larger, as available data does not capture the rapid expansion of access to early childhood education provided by a short course in the year before school, sometimes referred to as ‘Grade Zero’, which is intended to become a free and universal service. While access to early learning opportunities has expanded for many children, available data show that equity gaps remain (and have increased in some instances during the earlier part of the evaluation period). In some cases, the enrolment of children from urban and wealthier backgrounds has increased faster than that of children from rural, poor and ethnic minority backgrounds. The number of children with disabilities who are enrolled is gradually increasing, although levels remain very low and qualitative information indicates that children with disabilities still face significant access barriers to preschool.

Net enrolment rates in primary education have increased or stabilized in the five countries included in the evaluation. In addition, gender disparities have been reduced in primary education enrolment, and girls and boys have, increasingly, gained equal opportunities to progress from primary school through to lower secondary school. In Turkey, the Gender Parity Index increased from 0.92 to 0.99 for primary education and from 0.76 to 0.92 for secondary education between 2002 and 2011. Roma children access primary education but start to drop out of the lower secondary level in all five countries. However, significant progress in lower secondary attendance for both Roma boys and girls is being seen in some places. In Serbia, for example, the attendance rate of Roma children aged 11-15 years increased from 74 per cent in 2005 to 89 per cent in 2010. There has also been an increase in the number of children with special educational needs who are being deinstitutionalized and enrolled in mainstream schools; in Armenia, for example, the number of children in special schools decreased from 6,700 to 2,800 between 2007 and 2012.

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

2.1 Development effectiveness (DE) analysis

a) Health/nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Technical support and quality assurance in the areas of health, nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) was provided by the RO in 2014 in the framework of the regional results areas of ‘Children’s Right to the Highest Standards of Health’ and ‘Young Child Wellbeing (ECD, 0-3 years)’, which are two parts of the 10-point Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RCLA).

Timely technical guidance was ensured by the RO team through on-site and remote support that focused on selected priority countries that are in the process of developing their new CPDs (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan). Technical assistance to COs was also assured through a network of experts, particularly the Technical Advisory Group on Young Child Wellbeing, comprised of more than 20 internationally known experts from various sectors and disciplines, which has been functioning successfully for the past two years, as well as the newly established Inter-Agency Reference Group on Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health covering all countries and territories participating in RKLAs 6 and 7.
In the area of **immunization**, the major focus of the RO has been to provide leadership, guidance and direct technical support to all countries at high risk of polio in the region, particularly Turkey and Ukraine, through on-site technical assistance for immunization, polio, and emergency support in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine. Technical assistance in the areas of **nutrition** and **WASH** was constrained after the re-assignment of the Regional Nutrition Specialist who was also in charge of WASH. Responses to the emergency situations in Turkey and Ukraine represented another challenge as direct support from the RO technical staff in the areas of health and nutrition was required, given the lack of emergency staff in the two COs.

To increase opportunities for **knowledge generation and exchange**, the RO and the RKLA 7 Reference Group developed a rich work plan for the year, supported by video conferences and an active Yammer platform. With the support of the Technical Advisory Group, the **Regional Guidance Package on Home Visiting for Young Child Wellbeing** was elaborated and is being finalized for validation and dissemination. A first set of 14 modules of the package was drafted, focusing on typical child development, injury prevention, developmental difficulties, safeguarding, and home-visitor skills to engage vulnerable families.

b) **HIV/AIDS**

Over sight, technical guidance and quality assurance was provided in 2014 in the areas of **HIV/AIDS and young people’s health and development** to offices and selected national and regional partners through both on-site and remote support, including by engaging with networks of experts and institutions. The focus areas included: joint UN reporting on progress in achieving national and global HIV targets, support for **early infant HIV diagnosis** (in Ukraine and Central Asian countries), supporting **children and families living with HIV** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), supporting adolescents living with HIV (Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), elimination of **mother-to-child transmission of HIV** with a focus on marginalized and at-risk women (Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine), support to policies on **vulnerable adolescents** (e.g. adolescents who are not in employment, education or training in Romania), and the provision of **adolescent-friendly services** (Belarus, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Ukraine).

c) **Education**

The RO provided continuous technical support – direct and indirect – to the region for a **child’s right to early learning** (RKLA 3) result area in 2014. The highlight was the successful completion of an MCE that was carried out in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In addition, support was provided for the design and completion of a national evaluation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a country that has shown exemplary advances in early learning and school readiness (ELSR).

Top-level technical expertise was identified to support country-level and regional activities: COs were exposed to innovations and new knowledge through events such as the workshop on ‘**Strengthening Early Childhood Education Systems: Investing Early to Ensure Effective Learning**’ (Bucharest, April 2014), conducted in partnership with the World Bank and Open Society Foundations; and the International Step by Step Biennial Conference, ‘**Creating a Society for ALL: Reconsidering Early Childhood Services**’ (Budapest, October 2014). Offices were supported for advocacy (Uzbekistan), providing policy advice and developing legislation (Georgia), knowledge generation (Montenegro and the former Yugoslav...
Knowledge exchange was promoted through a dedicated ELSR online platform, the creation of knowledge products, translation of knowledge products into Russian, and through the convening of the ELSR Regional Reference Group. The RO also contributed significantly to the global discussion on ECD and participated in the drafting of the corporate ECD Global Strategy.

The technical expertise and programme guidance provided by the RO to the 18 COs that contributed to the regional inclusive education and quality learning result area (RKLA 4) included in-country support visits, online assistance, provision of regional consultants in the areas of inclusive education, learning, education in emergencies, as well as the organization of multi-country events to facilitate learning across countries, knowledge exchange and horizontal cooperation.

As a follow-up to the Regional Ministerial Education Conference co-organized by the RO and the Government of Turkey in December 2013, the RO organized three technical fora in 2014: (a) a joint UNICEF/OECD seminar on learning outcomes, in which 11 countries participated; (b) a study tour in the Netherlands on early school leaving, in which eight countries participated; and (c) a technical workshop in Romania on monitoring out-of-school children, in which 12 countries participated. The concrete outcomes of these regional events include the following: five countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey, and Serbia) will benefit from OECD expertise for education sector reviews, participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018, and the development of learning assessment systems, while several other countries have made plans to upgrade their Education Management Information System to incorporate indicators and definitions related to school dropout, absenteeism and out-of-school children.

d) Child protection

The MCE on the regional result area on the right of children to live in a family environment (RKLA 1) was carried out in 11 countries in 2014 and its findings were reviewed with the Evaluation Team during a validation forum with concerned COs and experts. Support was also provided to the review of related country evaluations in Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Turkey. An inventory of country needs and resources in social work development was initiated by the RO and will be pursued through the Transformed Agenda with the Government of Turkey in 2015. A compendium of promising multi-sectoral practices for enforcing the right of children below the age of three to live in a family environment was prepared in 2014 with contributions from all countries in the region. The RO supported the CO in Bulgaria to progress achieved in the implementation of the country’s national deinstitutionalization plan supported by the European Commission.

In November, over 150 high-level representatives from 19 countries in the CEE/CIS region, including government officials from child protection, social welfare, health, education and justice sectors, civil society organizations, ombudspersons, international experts, research institutions, and UNICEF staff members, gathered in Minsk at the Regional Conference on Strengthening Child Protection Systems to Protect Children from Neglect, Abuse, Exploitation and Violence. The conference highlighted that States are accountable for ensuring that functional systems are put into place with appropriate services, a clear role defined for each actor of the system and proper coordination mechanisms for ensuring that holistic responses are put into place, and that a wide range of actors (health workers,
social workers, police officers, NGOs, and municipalities, etc.) are also accountable for providing comprehensive and multi-sectoral responses in order to overcome fragmented initiatives which have limited impact on the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence.

The RO also continued to promote equitable access to justice for children in the region, in particular through advocacy, knowledge generation and management, monitoring and evaluation and technical support. This work included leading and facilitating knowledge generation, with the completion of a research study on children’s equitable access to justice as a contribution to child rights accountability, rule of law and sustainable development; facilitating exchange across countries, through the Reference Group of the RKLA 2 result area: a child’s right to access to justice, with participants from 11 COs and an online knowledge sharing platform; facilitating the documentation of UNICEF’s contribution to juvenile justice reforms in the region and lessons learned through a MCE; advocating for the inclusion of children’s access to justice in EU policies in the region through the development of joint RO/CO messages, as well as advocating for a stronger focus on this issue by the Human Rights Council, through technical support to a day of discussion on the topic at the Council. The RO provided continuous technical support on the matter to COs, especially those engaged in country programme document (CPD) and mid-term review (MTR) processes, on how to best translate the emerging regional approach to children’s access to justice into policy advocacy and programming at country level.

e) Social inclusion

In 2014, the RO continued to support the 16 COs in the result area: a child’s right to social protection – elimination of child poverty and of financial barriers hampering the realization of other child rights (RKLA 8), mainly through the facilitation of funding for field office work (thematic and set-aside), virtual meetings and exchanges of knowledge of the RKLA 8 reference group (nine COs). The RO provided mostly tailored strategic guidance and technical advice to COs through on-site and off-site support on child poverty, reform of social protection systems and modeling/scaling-up of case management, human rights and non-discrimination (Roma inclusion and children affected by migration, in particular), public finance for children (costing of new services and performance evaluation reports), governance and decentralization. Specifically, technical assistance was provided on how to enhance the effectiveness of interventions in social protection reforms to benefit children, e.g., in Georgia on making the case for human capital development that starts at an early age, and advocating for a greater priority for families with children in terms of access social protection benefits; in Romania, on assessing the economic and social cost of not investing in education; in Azerbaijan, on analysing the impact of the fuel-price increases on poverty and child well-being; in Kyrgyzstan, on expanding public budgets for pro-poor cash transfers and designing the country’s new Social Protection Strategy; and in Ukraine, on articulating key policy messages for urgent social protection measures to avert any systemic impact of the crisis on vulnerable children. In 2015, more focus will be placed on producing strategic guidance on social inclusion issues (social protection, excluded groups, decentralization), on facilitating access to external expertise, and on promoting more exchanges beyond borders.

A Working Group on Inclusion and Gender Equality, mandated by the Regional Management Team (RMT) and bringing together RO staff with different expertise and two country representatives, began to develop a common approach for UNICEF to realize the rights of the most vulnerable children in the region. A review of the evidence available was conducted on four issues (gender equality, children from minority groups, children with disabilities, and children affected by migration: see more details in section 3.2). The findings were used to produce four short draft position papers that highlighted the situation of specific groups of children in the region and UNICEF’s commitments to drive results for
them. The Working Group also helped to re-establish the Regional Network of Focal Points on gender and disability and was able to identify opportunities for advocacy and cooperation with external actors, such as the European Union (at the EU Roma Summit in April and with a new EU-funded Project on Violence and Children with Disabilities) and a private sector companies interested in a partnership to promote the rights of Roma children. The challenges to this cross-sectoral work were those traditionally observed in mainstreaming: additional work for existing staff without additional resources, and difficulties in ensuring that inclusion and gender equality are addressed in a cross-sectoral way to ensure that overlapping and reinforcing deprivations are tackled. However, the benefits included working in a group with diverse expertise where the result is greater than the sum of each specific contribution.

f) **Humanitarian assistance**

In 2014, as the crisis escalated in Ukraine, the RO increased its technical advice and operational support to the UNICEF CO. This entailed supporting the CO with needs assessments, emergency response planning, inter-agency coordination, staff training, resource mobilization and surge capacity. In Turkey, the RO continued to support the ongoing emergency response, as part of the regional Syrian refugee response framework. This involved liaison with the UNICEF Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa and HQ, on-site technical support, surge capacity and supporting transition to and the expansion of emergency response programming. The RO also provided active support for the COs responding to the unprecedented floods that hit Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia.

The CEE/CIS Region was part of the global preparedness initiative funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Within this framework, countries in Central Asia, especially Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, benefited from capacity development in emergency preparedness and contingency planning. UNICEF, together with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and World Food Programme (WFP), organized contingency planning workshops and simulation exercises for government counterparts, UN Country Teams and NGOs. For the first time in the region, a **cross-border emergency simulation exercise** was organized jointly with the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the international community. In Uzbekistan, the UN Country Team (UNCT) worked with the Government to conduct a joint contingency planning exercise, which resulted in the development of a joint action plan to boost emergency response for potential disasters, including the possibility of a major earthquake hitting Tashkent. This helped to enhance coordination, communication and experience sharing between the key stakeholders. Sessions on **UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action** (CCCs) were organized to promote child-focused emergency preparedness and response planning. In addition, the global Humanitarian Performance Monitoring tool was rolled out in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, strengthening UNICEF CO capacities to support effective response interventions, in line with the identified emergency scenarios within the contingency plan. UNICEF RO and CO also conducted country-level assessments to determine the availability of, and procurement options for, emergency supplies at the country and international level.

As part of the **South-South Cooperation**, the RO Office facilitated the sharing of Brazil’s experience on the **integration of the CCCs into its national emergency policies** with the Government of Kazakhstan. This was the first such knowledge exchange related to the CCCs. Within the framework of the region’s **disaster-risk reduction (DRR)** result area (RKLA 9), the RO organized a presentation by Kyrgyzstan at the Asian Ministerial Conference in June 2014, demonstrating the methodology and the results of the nationwide school safety assessment supported by UNICEF. The RO also supported the initiation of a similar school safety assessment in Armenia. In April 2014, the RO coordinated UNICEF’s inputs into the
Central Asia and South Caucasus post-2015 DRR Framework from the perspective of school safety and child participation.

As part of its regional capacity development, the RO organized several webinars, most notably on humanitarian performance monitoring and early warning, early action systems. The RO provided timely review of the country risk assessments and advice on preparedness planning actions.

**g) Gender**

The RO coordinated inputs from the region into the development of UNICEF’s new Gender Action Plan (GAP) in the first quarter of 2014, incorporating detailed comments across several drafts. The region appreciated the consultation process that was put in place by UNICEF HQ, especially the opportunity for all colleagues to post their comments on a dedicated internal platform. One challenge, however, was the limited time available, which did not allow the sharing of the final draft GAP by HQ with all regions and offices prior to its finalization for the presentation to the UNICEF Executive Board in April.

In 2015, the RO will drive the development of a regional framework for gender equality that will be in line with the GAP but contextualized to the reality of the CEE/CIS region. The RO also participated in shaping the functions of a new P5 Gender Advisor, who will be hired in the first half of 2015.

A short narrative on Gender Equality in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, produced by the RO in 2014, identifies key trends in gender equality across the region that affect girls and boys, provides some recommendations for governments and highlights UNICEF’s current and future role. The main gender inequalities highlighted in the region are: a ‘re-traditionalization’ of gender roles as a result of the global economic and financial crisis; unequal access to education between girls and boys; gender-based violence and violence by intimate partners that are often supported by embedded cultural norms and practices; unequal labour market opportunities for men and women that have a strong impact on the development of girls and boys; son preference and the increasing phenomenon of ‘missing women’ in some countries of the region; adolescent suicides, especially among males; and the risk of adolescents’ exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

In terms of technical assistance to COs, remote communication and support to CO Gender Focal Points were organized in the last quarter of 2014. A gender sensitization exercise in Azerbaijan for the UNCT and Government was facilitated by two UNICEF staff from the region, with remote support from HQ, as part of the preparation of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The RO also facilitated: (a) a module on mainstreaming gender equality through the programme cycle, during the regional trainings on the programme planning process (PPP) in September; (b) a session on gender equality and social inclusion at a meeting with 12 deputy representatives in countries with new CPDs in September; (c) a session at the October RMT on the conclusion of a rapid review of social inclusion and gender equality trends in the region, with an agreed action point for the regional priority areas (RKLAs) to incorporate strategies to reach vulnerable children and advance gender equality; and (d) a session on the GAP and implications for monitoring and evaluation, at the M&E Regional Network meeting in November. Technical assistance on gender assessment (using the existing core package) was provided to Belarus and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244).

An online consultation of 21 offices on child marriage was organized by the RO Child Protection unit: analysis of the results is planned for early 2015 and will inform a decision on whether to prioritize this area of work at regional level. The RO contributed actively to the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting.
on 6-7 November 2014 in Geneva, co-hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UN Women (see more details in section 3.1). The background documentation and final report of the meeting, available online, will be used as input into the development of a UNICEF strategic framework for gender equality in the CEE/CIS Region.

h) Strategic planning and results-based management

The RO continues to see results-based management (RBM) capacity development as a key component of its support to the efforts of COs to improve their management for results. Accordingly, in 2014 the RO put in place a mechanism whereby COs benefit from targeted support at critical moments in the development of their country programme. The key strategies to strengthen their capacity in planning and RBM has been to continue to raise awareness of the key tools that are already available in the organization. This was achieved through PPP trainings that covered RBM and that enabled over 60 participants from 12 COs that were preparing new CPDs to formulate results frameworks and monitor their results on a regular basis over the programme cycle. In addition, support for the development of theories of change and the documentation of best practices in the application of Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES) at all stages of planning have continued to prove effective in improving the quality of results formulation, monitoring and reporting.

i) Other support relevant to the equity refocus

As reported above, a number of MCEs were carried out in 2014. Of the five planned evaluations, two were completed as of the end of 2014, two were in the final report-writing stages, and one was still in progress. All MCE products to date have been reviewed by an external independent company as “highly satisfactory” in quality. Management responses are now being prepared by the RKLA Reference Groups for the two completed MCEs. Complementary funding from HQ (under Managing for Results) is being used to support country-level action plans and the integration of the findings from the MCEs into country planning processes, particularly those for CPD development and MTRs. A proactive dissemination plan has been prepared to communicate the MCE results to a wide range of external audiences, creating an opportunity for advocating for change in a number of areas. The RO also commissioned a thematic evaluation of UNICEF’s youth communication work, which has been framed under an initiative called the Young People’s Media Network (YPMN).

2.2 Lessons learned

Country offices continue to rely on the RO for technical support, as many of them are under increasing pressure by partners, with many areas to address in relation to child rights. As COs face more financial pressures and capacity issues, they are depending increasingly on technical guidance, support and oversight from the RO (in collaboration with HQ, as needed) — a function that is increasing, rather than decreasing in UNICEF. As the needs grow, the idea of identifying and hiring ‘fly in, fly out’ technical expertise seems increasingly simplistic, given that COs need more consistent technical support, with adequate follow-up and oversight. Through the RKLAs’ result areas, the RO and COs are coordinating priorities, needs and technical assistance, including through cross-office exchanges and collaboration.

The ELSR MCE pointed to the need to review how inter-sectorality is handled at the regional and national levels, both in UNICEF’s internal programming and organization and in the linkages such sectorality supports at the system level to ensure the adoption of a strategic, joined-up approach to early education.
Furthermore, based on the evidence it gathered, the MCE recommended that UNICEF should promote the comprehensive professional development of education specialists who support ELSR activities so that as well as coming to understand early learning, they also develop their knowledge about health, development, child protection, parenting and socio-economic vulnerabilities, as well as how to conduct comprehensive assessments. These recommendations have been addressed in the Management Response to the MCEs.

The quality assurance system that was put in place for the MCEs ensured that the evaluations were well-managed and were documented rigorously and systematically. The importance of well-designed terms of reference for such exercises cannot be overstated as they establish the blueprint for the strategic framing and conduct of evaluations. Senior management commitment to independent evaluation is indispensable for results-based management, ensuring that the results from evaluations are seriously considered in forward planning and in advocacy. One key lesson learned on improving the use of evaluation results is that the clear identification of the audience for the evaluation, and the strategy for engagement and communication with them about the evaluation need to be defined from the beginning of the process.

Part 3:

Analysis of programme strategies and results: Global and regional programme (GRP)

3.1 Global and regional programme (GRP) analysis

ROMP Output 703.1: A child’s right to the highest standards of health (RKLA 6)

Within RKLA 6, one of the most important achievements in 2014 was the implementation of the MCE that aimed to document UNICEF’s contribution to progress in child survival, covering five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, and Uzbekistan. The report on the findings will be produced by mid-2015 and will be used to revise the RKLA 6 Theory of Change, as well as for policy making and advocacy at regional and country levels.

RO support in addressing critical system-level bottlenecks focused on the poor capacity of managers to implement equity-focused, quality improvement programmes in maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) and ensuring adequate budget allocation for MNCH programmes. The core team of experts developed a follow-up country support methodology based on the regional model on management for equity and quality which was developed in 2013 in Trieste,. To improve coherence in this area, three agencies, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) initiated the work of a regional reference group on the quality of MNCH in the context of the Joint Action Framework signed in 2013. These efforts resulted in several countries putting in place national plans to strengthen the capacity of health managers (particularly at sub-national level) to implement equity-focused programmes aimed at continuous improvements in quality. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, the ministries of health endorsed these plans and initiated their implementation, while in Georgia the improvement of the national vital registration and health-information management systems is underway.
In the area of financing and budgeting for equitable MNCH services, the RO initiated support to five countries in Central Asia to influence health financing and public-finance management for the sustainability of such services, including nutrition and immunization programmes.

UNICEF partnered effectively with WHO Europe on the elaboration of the Regional Child and Adolescent Health Strategy, the Regional Plan of Action on the Prevention of Child Maltreatment and the Regional Vaccine Action Plan, including through the RO’s active participation and contributions at the WHO Regional Committee meeting. UNICEF has been invited to become member of a WHO Regional Expert Group on the prevention of maltreatment, while WHO experts participate in the UNICEF Technical Advisory Group on Young Child Wellbeing.

In the area of immunization, regional partnerships and ongoing support to countries contributed to the prevention of the importation of polio from Syria and Iraq (therefore maintaining the region’s polio-free status) by conducting six supplementary immunization campaigns in Turkey. Funding, vaccine supply and technical support was mobilized for Ukraine, a country in the global red list for polio, to prevent polio importation and outbreak. Seven countries benefited from technical assistance provided in close coordination with WHO Euro on effective vaccine management/polio/communication to support the introduction of new vaccines (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan).

Knowledge exchange and horizontal cooperation was promoted by the RO, including a joint HQ-RO polio assessment in Turkey, support to a sub-regional meeting to facilitate knowledge exchange on vaccine procurement and financing in Sarajevo, covering Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and a regional vaccine registration meeting attended by four countries (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan).

As a result, of these efforts, 15 of the 21 CEE/CIS countries (71 per cent) reached the regional target of 95 per cent or higher for coverage of DTP3-containing vaccine, 11 (52 per cent) reached the target for MCV1 coverage. In addition, eight countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Turkmenistan) increased their DTP3 immunization coverage compared to the previous year, and several countries introduced new vaccines in the national immunization programme in 2014:

- PCV: four countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova)
- IPV: three countries (Albania, Kazakhstan, and Serbia)
- RV: two countries (Georgia and Uzbekistan)

To ensure the most current and evidence-based technical assistance, the RO has maintained its Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Young Child Wellbeing/Home Visiting Services, which consists of top-level experts, representing sectors that are relevant to improving young child wellbeing (health, development, child protection, research, training, monitoring and evaluation, etc.). The TAG made an extensive contribution to the generation and dissemination of critical knowledge, capacity development, and the sharing of best practices, developing regional tools and providing direct technical assistance to COs.

To strengthen programming for young children with developmental difficulties, the RO organized a second orientation course on family-centred services and developmental paediatrics with the Ankara University Developmental Paediatrics Unit, Turkey, attracting delegations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The two orientation courses in
2013 and 2014 are contributing to system changes that are moving away from the medical to a social approach to developmental difficulties and the building of new capacities in the early identification and assessment of the young children concerned.

UNICEF has also contributed to the strengthening of horizontal linkages and partnerships on home-visiting models among countries within the region and beyond. Hosted by the Serbia Country Office and the Institute of Public Health, Belgrade, the RO and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) facilitated a review of select modules online and through in-person training. Delegations of trainers and home-visiting professionals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Turkmenistan, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Belarus contributed to this process and provided valuable recommendations. UNICEF also worked jointly with the UK Institute for Health Visiting to introduce more than 20 professionals and members of the TAG from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Serbia, and Turkmenistan to the model of home-visiting services implemented in the UK. The RO RKLA 7 team made use of the biannual conference organized by UNICEF’s partner ISSA as a platform to disseminate UNICEF’s work on young child wellbeing with practitioners and policy makers from Western Europe, the CEE/CIS region and other parts of the world.

As a result of these concerted efforts, 10 UNICEF offices (Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkmenistan) have contributed to national policies, ensuring that early child development and home-visiting services are included in national plans, regulatory frameworks, and national standards, with the focus in all but two (Albania and Azerbaijan) on comprehensive home-visiting services. Four countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) initiated policy changes for children with developmental difficulties. As a contribution to regional knowledge generation and the documentation of results, Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted a high-quality evaluation of its centre-based and home-visiting services for integrated early childhood development (IECD) and has shown promising results for young children and their families. Kazakhstan conducted a policy impact assessment of its patronage nurse system; Bulgaria completed a baseline for its demonstration area, and Turkmenistan used a new approach to cost various home-visiting options within the context of MNCH.

In the area of nutrition the major focus was on consolidating the progress made in the region on universal salt iodization (USI) and flour fortification while moving in parallel and more actively towards the integration of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling and support into primary healthcare and home-visiting services. Work on USI in the Russian Federation and Ukraine was documented in partnership with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). Preparations were initiated for two regional workshops on the sustainability of USI to be held in 2015.

Substantive technical assistance was provided to the emergency response in Turkey, resulting in the strengthened capacity of the Government to conduct a nutrition assessment and implement adequate response measures. As a result of the re-assignment of the Regional Nutrition Specialist, support was constrained in the second half of 2014.

**ROMP Output 703.5: A child’s right to be born and remain HIV-free (RKLA 5)**

Improving the quality of care for those with HIV is one of the key challenges in the CEE/CIS Region. As the number of HIV positive children continues to grow, and as their age profiles and life expectancies change, there have been important changes in patterns of HIV-related morbidity and mortality, and in
the associated care and treatment needs. Paediatric care providers are facing complex bio-medical and psychological conditions among HIV-infected children and adolescents, including among those who fail to respond to first and/or second line antiretroviral therapy (ART), those with co-infections such as tuberculosis and viral hepatitis, those presenting with HIV-related cancers, as well as those who have problems with adherence to treatment and mental health issues. As the population of HIV-positive children gets older, care providers are increasingly facing issues of disclosure, reproductive health, sexuality education, and the prevention of substance use. Many paediatric and adolescent care providers, as well as social and outreach workers in the region, feel the need to strengthen their skills and capacity to address these complex issues.

The RO supported countries in building the capacity of healthcare and social workers in the provision of clinical care and psychosocial support for children and adolescents living with HIV and also supported horizontal east-west cooperation and exchange between paediatric care providers and social workers from CEE/CIS countries and Western Europe. Collaboration with a team of top HIV care experts from the Paediatric European Network for the Treatment of Aids and co-infections (PENTA) and the Children’s HIV Association (CHIVA) strengthened the knowledge, skills and capacity of paediatric and adolescent HIV care providers and social workers in the region. In addition, four countries were supported in updating their national guidance and policies on early infant diagnosis and infant feeding in the context of the elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT).

Achieving the goals of EMTCT in the region requires a focus on the most affected and vulnerable women, such as those who use psychoactive substances, and ensuring their access to (and retention in) care, postnatal support to prevent family separation and support for the survival, health and development of their children. The RO facilitated the generation of evidence from Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine on effective approaches for working with these vulnerable women, ensuring linkages between health and social services, as well as referrals between government and NGO providers to improve their retention in care.

Cross-country collaboration was facilitated for HIV positive adolescents to build their resilience, coping strategies and leadership skills. A regional programme to strengthen services for adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) has been developed in partnership with CHIVA, the East Europe & Central Asia Union of PLWH and local NGOs. Programmes that built leadership among ALHIV also built their self-confidence, skills and their capacity to advocate for their rights, as well as to engage with their HIV positive and negative peers. ALHIV also developed social networking and web-based information exchange platforms (www.teenergizer.org).

The RO continued to work with partners in five countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) in 2014 to strengthen the capacity of civil society and government partners to promote and provide quality HIV testing and counselling (HTC) services and to ensure that more young people have access such services. Two regional knowledge hubs (one on data, one on training) were launched to facilitate information exchange on HTC among countries.

**ROMP Output 703.6: A child’s right to education - early learning and school readiness (RKLA 3)**

In 2014, a number of CEE/CIS countries registered increases in preschool enrolment including in the number of ethnic minority children, children from rural areas and/or children with disabilities attending preschool, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Serbia. Policy commitments, new legislation, regulations and/or improved standards and protocols for inclusive preschool education were
reported from Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Turkey. Reforms were made to the preschool curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, and were initiated in Georgia.

Results in the preschool sector were predicated on established and continuing system level changes, such as influencing social norms (Moldova and Turkey), providing policy and budgetary advice (Montenegro), developing the capacities of ELSR professionals (Croatia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan), setting up management and coordination mechanisms (e.g. inter-sectoral groups, as in Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, an Early Childhood Education Department in the Turkish Ministry of National Education, and preschool coordination councils in Uzbekistan), the increased supply of preschool places and increased enrolment through alternative/innovative models (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey), enhancing demand and improving quality and quality measurement mechanisms (e.g. through enabling the provision of educational toys in Bulgaria, mandatory record keeping in kindergartens and improved inspection framework in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the development of the School Readiness Tool and Guide in Moldova, and the ECD Monitoring Framework in Turkmenistan).

UNICEF has typically supported countries to advance the ELSR agenda through the execution of its core roles, including being the ‘voice’ for children (Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Uzbekistan), facilitating national dialogue and providing technical assistance (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Turkmenistan), leveraging resources (Albania, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan), generating evidence (Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkmenistan), and raising awareness among families and communities of the benefits of preschool education (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan).

The MCE on ELSR that was completed in 2014 proved to be not only a critical source of evidence but also a means of setting a benchmark for high-quality evaluations in the CEE/CIS region. Its findings and recommendations formed the basis for a draft regional document: A Fair Start - strategic directions in early learning and school readiness. Fine-tuned through an intensive consultative process, this document will guide the work of UNICEF and its partners on ELSR for the coming five to 10 years.

Strategic partnerships in the region were strengthened or initiated with key ELSR players in CEE/CIS including the Open Society Foundations (OSF), ISSA, the Roma Education Fund (REF), EU-EAC, and OECD. Together with OSF, ISSA and Save the Children, a regional advocacy forum, the Early Years Regional Alliance, which now has over 30 members, was established and its draft 10-point manifesto was shared and reviewed at the region’s biggest ECD gathering, the ISSA Biennial Conference (Budapest, October 2014). A report on Roma Early Childhood Inclusion, the sixth in the series, was prepared employing an improved methodology (highlighting the participation of members of the Roma community) together with OSF and REF, for Croatia. The report provides an in-depth analysis of the situation of young Roma children in Croatia and recommendations to address their rights and needs; many of these recommendations are relevant to other countries with Roma populations.

ROMP Output 703.7: A child’s right to quality education on the basis of equal opportunity (RKLA 4)

The RO completed a MCE on its work on basic education in the region in 2014. The goals were: (a) to assess the extent to which UNICEF’s programme interventions contributed to results for children, at
impact and system level, in terms of reduction in the number of children out of school and improved quality of education (learning outcomes); and (b) to generate learning on best practices, innovations, and models that can be shared throughout the region. The MCE covered the period 2002-2012 in five countries and territories that had reported significant results in terms of the increased enrolment and retention of children with disabilities, Roma children and girls: Armenia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. The findings and recommendations of the MCE are being disseminated throughout the region and are contributing to a prospective regional education agenda (RKLA 4).

In 2014, the RO also published a regional analysis of the 2009 results of OECD’s PISA, in which 13 countries from the region participated, and conducted a study of the impact of education financing reforms on equity. These knowledge products are contributing to national policy dialogue and informing education sector reforms in the areas of equity in access and learning.

CEE/CIS continued to be the leading region in the area of inclusive education for children with disabilities in 2014 and, as such, contributed to global knowledge and better understanding of this issue with the production (underway) of 14 webinars and companion technical booklets, and the development of the Inclusive Education Teacher Preparation Toolkit. In partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other international disability partners, the RO worked on the formulation of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education and contributed to its ‘inclusiveness’. As part of the global out-of-school children initiative, the RO finalized a regional framework for monitoring out-of-school children (OOSC) or at risk of dropping out, which was incorporated into the global OOSC Operational Manual and is now being disseminated throughout the region.

The Call for Action, ‘Including All Children in Quality Learning’, endorsed by 17 countries at the Regional Ministerial Education Conference co-organized by the RO and the Government of Turkey in December 2013 set the foundations of a regional education agenda (RKLA 4), together with the findings and recommendations of the MCE on education. Building on this political momentum, the RO organized three technical events in 2014: (a) a joint UNICEF/OECD seminar on learning outcomes; (b) a study tour in the Netherlands on early school leaving; and (c) a technical workshop on monitoring out-of-school children. These events have further contributed to greater political will to reform education systems and have provided guidance and examples of good practices on how to help education institutions to adopt inclusive practices and improve learning outcomes. A RKLA 4 website www.education-equity.org in development.

ROMP Output 703.8: A child’s right to live in a caring and supportive family environment (RKLA 1)

The RO continued its efforts to facilitate the implementation of a regional approach to child-care reform that enables COs to pursue the transition from the development of alternative care to the adoption of policies oriented towards family support, measures to prevent the separation of the most vulnerable children from their families and support for nurturing families for all children. Results have been achieved in several countries including Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Progress has also been achieved on giving a stronger weight in policies and programmes to the most vulnerable children, particularly children under the age of three, children with disabilities and, to a lesser extent, Roma children and children from minority groups. Children with disabilities, in particular, remain at risk of exclusion and too many continue to live in inappropriate institutional care. In a number of CEE/CIS countries, children from some minority groups, notably Roma,
remain at risk of being over-represented in the care system. Particular groups of children and families remain ‘hard to reach’ or, in some cases, have been ‘left behind’ by the progressive reforms of recent years. As a result, some equity gaps remain untouched in some countries.

A regional partnership has been pursued to disseminate and support the implementation of the International Guidelines on Alternative Care with key NGOs such as Child Connect and International Social Services, and a partnership has been forged with the Centre for Excellence for looked-after children in Scotland (CELCIS) at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. UNICEF continued playing a key role in the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care for leveraging policies in the social sector with the European Commission and organized national seminars in 2014 in Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia to influence the allocation of EU Structural Funds.

Knowledge exchange was pursued across the region (a delegation from Turkmenistan visited Serbia and delegations from Cuba, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, and Tunisia visited Romania to take stock of the progress achieved in the region on the prevention of family separation and the placement of young children in institutional care,

Output 703.9: A child’s right to access to justice (RKLA 2)

New evidence to improve policies and programmes on justice for children across the region was generated by the RO in 2014. A MCE was completed on the impact on children of juvenile justice reforms between 2006 and 2012. The MCE established that the number of children in detention (pre- and post-trial) fell by almost 60 per cent between 2006 – when most of the juvenile justice reforms started in the region – and 2012. During the same period, the number of children diverted from judicial proceedings – one of UNICEF’s main focus in the reforms – almost doubled, meaning that these children received support outside the justice system. Disaggregated data that would allow the assessment of whether these results have benefitted all children, including the most vulnerable, were not available. However, the evaluation team considered that there was a high probability that children from vulnerable groups were disproportionately likely to be arrested and detained – and that therefore UNICEF’s focus on reducing detention rates and lengths contributed indirectly to narrowing the equity gap in juvenile justice. The evaluation identified successful system changes that triggered these results for children.

The RO completed a research study on children’s equitable access to justice in 2014, aiming to leverage EU policies (a priority within the RKLA 2). Access to justice is one of the main priorities of the EU in enlargement and neighbourhood countries but children have not been included adequately to date. To highlight the particular rights and needs of children and the reasons why their access to justice must differ from that of adults, the cross-country research study on children’s equitable access to justice explains why extending generic measures designed for adults to children is not sufficient. It also spells out why children’s access to justice should be at the core of any human rights, rule of law and sustainable development agenda, and recommends ways to reflect these imperatives in government policies. The RKLA 2 reference group also prepared advocacy messages for the EU that are being used both at the Brussels and country levels, increasing UNICEF’s regional capacity to speak with one voice on this issue.

There was also a focus on the facilitation of learning across countries, with both the MCE and the research study discussed within the RKLA 2 reference group at every stage, from the design of the terms of reference to the review of the final products. These discussions have enhanced cohesion across
countries and between the COs and the RO through, for example, the harmonization of the language and concepts used. A knowledge-exchange platform was also created, allowing for exchanges across countries, including beyond the RKLA 2 reference group and the region.

In 2014, the RO completed the coordination and management of a three-year regionally initiated **multi-country programme on justice for children** co-funded by the EU that began in 2011. Key results include new justice for children curricula that have been developed and are now being used by national training institutes (such as police academies and schools of magistrates); enhanced capacity of Ombudsman offices and national human-rights NGOs in monitoring the rights of children in conflict with the law; the development and introduction of amendments in relevant legislation, and the establishment of pilot diversion schemes and alternatives to deprivation of liberty that are now owned by the governments of the eight countries concerned.

**ROMP Output 703.10: A child’s right to social protection: elimination of child poverty and of financial barriers that hamper the realization of other child rights**

In 2014 the RO finalized the flagship report **Social Monitor 2015: Social Protection for Child Rights and Well being in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia**, to be published and used for public advocacy in 2015. The report found that, in general, the way in which social protection is structured and administered in the region at present is not relieving the deprivations and vulnerabilities of children effectively, and often fails to reach the most marginalized and those in the greatest need of assistance. Scaling up child-sensitive social protection in a meaningful way will require the re-allocation of fiscal resources to programmes for children.

The report highlighted that a number of countries in the region are already taking positive steps to develop or reform their **social protection benefits and services**. In 2014, Georgia revised its Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) formula to take child poverty into account, developed new qualification thresholds to increase coverage, introduced new child benefits, and established a child-assessment referral mechanism within the TSA system. The reforms are expected to reduce the current numbers of children living in extreme child poverty by two thirds. In Albania, the State Agency for Child Rights Protection linked its annual reporting on the status of child rights to a thorough analysis of budgetary expenditures at central and local levels for the first time. In Armenia, the pillars of the country’s Integrated Social Service reform, supported by UNICEF, were reflected in the Law on Social Assistance endorsed by the Parliament in December 2014, strengthening institutional cooperation among health, education, social protection and care services and providing special attention – reflected in revised indicators – to outreach to extremely poor families and to the reduction of poverty for children with disabilities. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, an inter-disciplinary working group at ministerial level, with support from UNICEF and the World Bank, was tasked to review cash benefits and provide policy recommendations for improvement.

In Moldova, a National Decentralization Strategy and an Action Plan were adopted, with UNICEF support, that included sectoral strategies for education and social services, as well as a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to measure progress at local level. UNICEF provided technical support to help line ministries in their budget negotiations with the Ministry of Finance: as a result, the Inclusive Education Programme was included in the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework of the Ministry of Education and co-payments for visits to physicians (including for children) were abolished. Following the presentation of UNICEF-commissioned study findings on preschool financing, Uzbekistan froze parental fees and increased its capital investments in preschools. In Kyrgyzstan, nearly 14,000 more children were enrolled

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in the poverty-targeted cash-transfer scheme following the distribution of communication materials, with support from UNICEF, and after a ministerial decision to update the parameters of the scheme.

Based on these emerging results, a number of countries were involved in horizontal cooperation exchanges in 2014 that were facilitated by UNICEF: Armenia (with Brazil, Myanmar and Tajikistan), Azerbaijan (with Turkey), Kyrgyzstan (with Tajikistan), and Moldova (with Lithuania). Furthermore, countries within and beyond the region learned from successful reforms of social protection systems that benefit children (particularly cash transfers and integrated social services).

The results of an RO-led analysis of the situation of Roma children and women in three countries in south eastern Europe were used for advocacy to focus the attention of policy makers on children at the Fourth EU Roma Summit in April 2014, with the help of a successful social-media campaign, fostering a more enabling environment to advance reforms for children at country level. A UNICEF-initiated nationwide campaign in Albania to bring ‘Every Roma Child to Preschool’ connected more than 500 Roma children to early learning in 2014, and was then taken up by the Ministry of Education.

The RO contributed actively to the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting on 6–7 November 2014 in Geneva, which was co-hosted by UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UN Women, with support from the regional offices of UNICEF, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The meeting addressed key areas of progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the UNECE Member States, such as the empowerment of women and girls, women’s representation and leadership in decision making, eliminating violence against women and girls, anti-discriminatory legislation and gender justice. UNICEF CEE/CIS contributed to the conceptualization of the event to ensure that the rights and situation of girls were given equal weight and importance. The RO also supported the participation of one civil-society activist from Montenegro, and of the Deputy Minister of Social Policy from Albania, who is also an activist in the disability movement.

The RO organized the panel on ‘Governance and Gender Justice’ on 7 November and produced the background paper, Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in the Europe and Central Asia region. A follow-up post on Violence against girls and boys in Europe and Central Asia appeared on the Global UNICEF Connect Blog. In 2014, Armenia adopted the new Law on Social Assistance, which gives case managers a distinctive role in addressing gender-based violence among children and their families. Following the CEDAW and Beijing +20 recommendations, the Prime Minister of Armenia also signed a decree to establish a gender-equality national mechanism. The UNICEF-supported ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence’ campaign in Azerbaijan resulted in the prevention of 22 attempted cases of child marriage in three communities. In Bulgaria, three family centres supported by UNICEF started to integrate the prevention of child marriage among Roma communities into their outreach work in 2014, providing support and counselling to 90 Roma adolescent girls. In Serbia, UNICEF supported teachers in primary schools, young trainers and peer activists to sensitize students and peers to the prevention of, and adequate responses to, gender-based violence. Georgia signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in June 2014 and introduced related legal amendments into its national legislation. In Montenegro, indicators and methodology for gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis in juvenile justice were integrated into the existing Judicial Information System.
ROMP Output 703.11: A child’s right to be protected from disasters caused by natural hazards (RKLA 9)

The RO continued to support and facilitate a regional approach to disaster-risk reduction (DRR) as well as emergency preparedness planning. Inter-agency contingency plans were developed in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Tajikistan, sector-specific contingency plans for the education, child protection and WASH sectors have been elaborated with partners and government. In 2014, Armenia mainstreamed DRR in a number of education-related policy and programme documents. In addition, school-safety assessment methodology was developed to assess the structural and non-structural safety of education facilities in the country, paving the way for the mapping of the vulnerability status of schools and allowing for the mobilization of resources for school rehabilitation and retrofitting that would reduce children’s exposure to hazards. Azerbaijan introduced an approach to the conduct of multi-sectoral disaster-risk analysis that was piloted and endorsed by the Government, thereby supporting sub-national strategies and programmes to mitigate or prevent the impact of disasters on children and women. The RO supported the presentation of Kyrgyzstan’s experience at the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR in June 2014.

Regional partnerships supported the strengthening of emergency preparedness plans in Central Asia in collaboration with OCHA and WFP. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the inter-agency cross-border emergency simulation exercise was documented and the results were presented to the Humanitarian Country Teams, which endorsed follow-up actions. In Uzbekistan, a similar action plan was endorsed and is being pursued by the UNCT in close consultation with the Government.

Knowledge exchange was facilitated between Kazakhstan and Brazil on the latter’s experience in incorporating the Core Commitments for Children into its national emergency response system. Partnership with the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) was strengthened to provide further support to the institutionalization of DRR in education and disaster-management policies and procedures through the mobilization of €1.35 million for Central Asia and South Caucasus.

The production and dissemination of knowledge and information products supported the promotion of good practices and innovative approaches within the region and beyond. Most notably, these included Learning and knowledge resources for DRR in education; Good practices in DRR in Education; and the Guidance Note for Disaster Risk Analysis at the sub-national level.

ROMP Output 703.12: Adolescents – second decade, second chance (RKLA 10)

In the context of RKLA 10, Adolescents: second decade, second chance, the RO worked to build consensus among government and civil society partners and support interventions to protect the rights of vulnerable adolescents in three key areas: (a) peace building; working with adolescents as agents of change to promote cross-border peace, security, tolerance and respect for diversity in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan,) the Caucasus, south eastern Europe, Moldova and Ukraine; (b) developing adolescents’ full potential; by building on their strengths, ensuring their access to supportive health, education, social and recreational services, and building their competence and confidence through quality education that helps to prepare them for employment, and (c) promoting social inclusion by fostering the engagement of adolescents in all areas affecting their lives, and increasing their competence and connections so that they can benefit from opportunities to contribute to anti-discrimination and positive attitudes towards diversity.
Specifically, the RO supported the development of the Kazakhstan national youth policy; and promoted the increased engagement of adolescents who are not in education, employment or training in Bulgaria and Romania and at the first Global Forum on Youth Policies, held in Baku, Azerbaijan in October 2014. UNICEF coordinated a parallel session at the Forum with a panel of experts on the importance of education in fostering civic engagement and employment, in collaboration with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The RO also provided technical support and guidance to the Human Rights Council Resolution on the Right of the Child to Engage in Play and Recreational Activities, proposed by the Governments of Romania, Brazil, Norway and 54 co-sponsors and adopted by consensus on 22 September 2014.

UNICEF launched a regional network of adolescent advocates and practitioners to work with adolescents from 12 countries of the CEE/CIS Region, aiming to share experience and build resilience among vulnerable adolescents. The network launched two online regional hubs to link practitioners and outreach workers, allowing them to share the latest research findings and capacity building tools and guidelines to help ensure quality programming in developing outreach and social support, including HIV prevention and care among vulnerable adolescents.

**ROMP Output 703.13: Data, monitoring and evidence**

Over the course of the year, 14 multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) were finalized. Another five are in progress in the region. The capacity of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) was strengthened through a series of MICS workshops on topics related to the conduct of major household surveys, and a Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE) network meeting of NSOs was, held in the last quarter of 2014 with high-level participation, where challenges and innovations in statistics on adults and children with disabilities were discussed.

In some countries, MICS and TransMonEE data remain the only reliable sources of data on children and are drawn upon heavily both internally (e.g. used by UNICEF offices for their CPD planning) and by partners (e.g. the EU Directorate General on Justice has relied on TransMonEE data on children in conflict with the law). UNICEF has also succeeded in making data available on children in hard-to-access regions and enclaves, such as Transnistria, and on specific marginalized groups, such as the Roma.

Throughout 2014, the RO sought to strengthen its partnerships with both the producers and users of data and evaluations. Its efforts included multiple contacts with EuroStat and UNECE, a presentation to a regional evaluation conference (IPEN), and reaching out with UNICEF data to regional advocacy groups such as the European Disability Forum and OSFs.

UNICEF has been supporting a number of governments in the region (including Kyrgyzstan, Romania and Turkey) to establish online data systems to collect data in ‘real time’ on vulnerable children and their access to services and support (education, social services, etc). In 2015, it is anticipated that real time data tools will be piloted in a MICS in Kazakhstan: such innovations allow for more timely planning and action and for the more frequent monitoring of equity gaps.

**ROMP Output 703.14: Partnerships**

In line with UNICEF Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 and UNICEF’s core roles in the CEE/CIS region, the RO supports policy advocacy and resource mobilization for children's rights and works to position UNICEF as
a trusted partner of governments and other key stakeholders on the progressive realization of child rights across the region.

**Resource mobilization**

In 2014, the RO developed a Resource Mobilization Action Plan that was approved by the RMT in October. There has been a significant increase of Other Regular Resources (ORR) income for CEE/CIS over the past four years, rising from $6.4 million in 2010 to $67.8 million in 2014 (as of 22 January 2015). The top resource partners for UNICEF in the region are the European Union (EU), United States, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Japan, and Austria.

Building on this positive trend, the key objectives of the Action Plan are as follows:

- Ensure that the regional priorities (RKLAs) serve as the framework for the resource mobilization efforts.
- Establish and maintain a comprehensive picture of the funding situation across the region including setting income targets.
- Create a system to provide updated information on priorities, targets and funding gaps in the RO and all COs.
- Continue effective engagement with the existing top OR partners.
- Invest in relations with top global donors (Germany, Netherlands and the Nordic countries) and explore new modalities (e.g. Norway/European Economic Area grants).
- Engage with emerging economies (China, Gulf States, Russian Federation, and Turkey).
- Reach out to the World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank.
- Continue global programme partnerships and, where relevant, explore options for UN Joint Programme funding.
- Develop a strategy on corporate/private engagement and identify the needs for CO and RO capacity building.
- Implement a revised RO quality assurance process for donor proposals and reports.
- Further promote partnerships with UNICEF’s National Committees to advance the child rights agenda across Europe.

**Regional organizations – the European Union and Council of Europe**

One of the key objectives of the RO over the past year has been to strengthen partnerships with key regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe in order to influence regional policy and produce regional public goods. Another objective has been to engage more with National Committees to advance the child rights agenda across Europe through joint advocacy. **Key results were achieved in the following four areas.**

**Advancing child rights as part of the EU accession and neighbourhood process**

- The EU-Moldova Association Agreement (signed and ratified in 2014) and Action Plan contain a chapter on child rights.
- Annual EU progress reports contained a chapter on child rights for all seven enlargement countries and all five European Neighbourhood Eastern Partnership countries.
• European Parliament resolutions included key child-rights issues for all seven enlargement countries and EU Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as resolutions on education in the Transnisterian region in Moldova and on the crisis in Ukraine.
• EU human-rights dialogues with Armenia, Georgia and Moldova discussed key child-rights issues.

Influencing EU and Council of Europe child rights governance and policies
• EU country-specific recommendations for Bulgaria and Romania highlighted child poverty, deinstitutionalization, the rights of Roma children and inclusive education.
• Council of the EU recommendations on Roma integration promoted the rights of Roma children and adolescents.
• New guidelines for EU structural and investments funds provided ex-ante conditions for EU funding to promote deinstitutionalization and promote Roma inclusion.
• COs in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania supported governments in implementing EU child-rights policies such as the EU Recommendation on Investing in Children through EU structural funds 2014-2020.
• UNICEF Romania, in cooperation with Government stakeholders, engaged with EU counterparts to provide input to EU child-rights policies and information about Romania’s implementation of child-rights commitments.
• UNICEF’s relations with the Council of Europe were reviewed and a strategy for engagement was proposed.
• UNICEF input was provided to the mid-term review of the current Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2012-2015) and the development of the next strategy (2016-2019).

Advocating for the rights of the most disadvantaged children
• There was joint advocacy with COs, National Committees and UNICEF’s Public Partnership Division (PPD) Brussels on the rights of Roma children at the EU Roma Summit in May 2014.
• Advocacy targeted the EU and its Member States to ensure a child’s right to a family environment under the umbrella of the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care (co-chaired by UNICEF) through seminars in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania and a conference in Brussels.
• Common advocacy messages aimed at the EU on access to justice for children were developed for use by COs, RO and PPD Brussels and there were focused advocacy meetings with representatives of EU institutions.

Leveraging and mobilizing resources
• The EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 and the respective sub-regional programmes include provisions to address child rights issues in CEE/CIS countries.
• A new EU-UNICEF regional programme on disaster-risk reduction in the Central Asia and South Caucasus region was agreed and launched.
• EU funding for UNICEF for humanitarian activities in Ukraine (WASH) was agreed and disbursed.
• New EU funding contracts were signed by COs in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Montenegro (2) and Serbia.
• A regional initiative on Violence Against Children & Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities was developed together with the European Disability Forum and included in the EU 2014-2020 regional funding programme for enlargement countries.

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3.2 Normative principles

The UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) focuses on key strategic result areas where UNICEF can deliver high-quality, relevant results that help to realize the rights of all children. UNICEF operates in the region through a ‘systems approach’ whereby interventions aim, on the one hand, to strengthen the accountability of duty bearers and the effectiveness of existing mechanisms and policies at national and local level (including independent human-rights monitoring bodies) to realize the rights of every child; while on the other hand, UNICEF supports children, families and communities to claim their rights.

While national averages show good progress in the region, some groups of children continue to suffer multiple deprivations and rights violations across all areas throughout their life cycle, including: children with disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities (including the Roma), migrant/refugee and displaced children, and children affected by gender inequity. These groups face additional barriers such as discrimination, segregation, stigma, and prejudice and often do not appear in national statistics. They become, in effect, ‘invisible’ and risk being forgotten – by decision makers, service providers, and the general population.

UNICEF operationalizes the human rights-based approach to programming in the region by ensuring that the barriers faced by particular groups of children are documented and addressed systematically, and in a synergetic manner, across all result areas and in all countries. UNICEF supports the realization of the rights of specific groups of excluded children by empowering them, their parents and the organizations that represent them to take action about their situation and future (including through accessing justice), by supporting countries to develop policies that identify and tackle all aspects of their deprivation through an integrated approach, by fighting against discrimination, and by promoting knowledge and respect for their identities and voices.

In 2014, the UNICEF CEE/CIS RMT decided to provide evidence more systematically about the situation of disadvantaged children, document effective practices and strategies at the regional level and bring together expertise and the experience accumulated to date in a circular process of trial, documentation, exchange and change. This includes triangular cooperation among countries, aiming to sharpen their focus on disadvantaged children and to support innovative solutions that require the contribution of multiple duty bearers.

A new regional mainstreaming mechanism and organizational driving force was established at the senior level in CEE/CIS with a specific focus on disadvantaged children: a Working Group on Inclusion and Gender Equality. The Working Group is intended to harness and bring together the investment and energy that UNICEF currently deploys towards particular target groups of children via the RKLAs and create a common vision for ALL children across all of the RKLAs. The purpose is to support the setting of clear objectives and targets in each result area, provide guidance for the development of programmatic strategies and new country programmes, contribute to the documentation of promising practices, and facilitate external partnerships that will benefit the work of each RKLA, as it relates to disadvantaged children and to gender equality. The Working Group acts as an advisory body of a temporary nature and its work is time-bound, with a focus on empowering all staff members to drive an agenda for the most vulnerable children in each RKLA and to achieve and document results.
As a first output, the Working Group commissioned a **Rapid Review of Trends in Gender Equality and Social Inclusion** affecting boys and girls in the region in 2014. The review was intended to help identify UNICEF’s positions and regional agenda for children from minority groups, children with disabilities and children affected by migration, and for gender equality.

The review found that a general lack of **disaggregated data** in the region makes it difficult to identify accurate numbers of children affected by respective rights violations and to pinpoint rights violations and their severity for specific groups. The non-existence of data reflects the lack of attention given to these children in these groups, who remain mostly ‘invisible’ in statistics and monitoring data. A second common barrier that contributes to several child-rights violations across all vulnerable groups and result areas are the **social norms** prevalent in the region, which cause either direct or indirect discrimination against children because they belong to one or more of the most disadvantaged groups. The existence and effective implementation of legislation is another essential factor that determines equal opportunities for the realization of child rights for all children. Here, a major weakness is evident in the fact that many children belonging to the groups reviewed suffer severe difficulties in accessing justice. Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information also determines whether rights are being violated for particular groups of children, which is reflected in inadequate adaptation of services and procedures and a lack of resources that would facilitate access to these services, or the sheer absence of any adequate services at all. And, finally, the confluence of discriminatory social norms, ineffective implementation of legislation and policies, and the limited access to services, facilities and information, results in a lack of accountability and responsiveness among the duty bearers who should ensure that children from the identified groups can realize their rights in full.

The review highlighted the **multiple, overlapping rights deprivations** that affect certain groups of children, such as trafficked Roma girls with disabilities who are forced to beg on the streets, and that require integrated policy responses. The findings of the review were complemented in 2014 by the results of the MCEs on Inclusive Education (RKLA 4) and Early Learning (RKLA 3) which highlighted both good progress in national averages, and the remaining challenges for Roma children, and particularly girls, to access and complete lower-secondary education, and for children with disabilities to participate in mainstream inclusive education. Access to early learning opportunities has improved over the past six to seven years, according to the MCE on this topic, but remains very low in the region on average and for certain groups of children, such as Roma children, in particular.

The evidence generated is expected to help shape a common regional narrative and a strategy in 2015 to address and mainstream the four equity dimensions in UNICEF’s regional inclusion agenda, which will define UNICEF’s role and value added in supporting national systems in CEE/CIS to become more inclusive.

### 3.3 Lessons learned

The recommendations of the MCE on **early childhood education** highlighted the need to develop a long-term strategy with equity at its core; to review the possible risks to quality arising from rapidly increasing access; to adopt a deeper approach to teacher preparation and children’s participation; and to support the development of standards for different modalities of early education provision, improved data collection and management, and engagement with decentralization.
The MCE on **inclusive education** revealed that UNICEF’s work has maintained its relevance by shifting from project-oriented programming to systems-level interventions and has made a significant contribution to system changes for education. Impact results show that adjusted net enrolment rates have increased in the region, the number of out-of-school children has decreased in some countries, gender inequities in enrolment have been reduced in almost all countries and that the enrolment rates of marginalized children have increased in many countries.

Learning outcomes have improved in certain countries, such as **Albania** and **Turkey**. Key system changes have contributed to these impact results: legislation and policies have, increasingly, secured equal access to school for boys and girls regardless of their ethnicity and abilities and child-friendly components have been widely integrated into education policies. While teachers have been increasingly trained on inclusive education principles and child-centred teaching and learning methodologies, implementation varies within countries. Poor-quality teaching remains a major challenge to learning in the region and inclusive education is hindered by weak education planning and financing systems.

**UNICEF’s contribution** to the system changes of recent years has been critical in terms of generating evidence and influencing the policy environment. In most countries, UNICEF has established a relationship based on mutual trust and professional reliability with national stakeholders, which has resulted in the reflection of policy advice, in general, in education policy changes. UNICEF has generated important information through studies and research, and has strengthened education data systems through MICS and other national processes, thereby facilitating national dialogue. This has allowed UNICEF offices to build capacity, broker knowledge and influence decision-making on education inclusion among government counterparts and partners.

Policy advice and technical assistance remain at the core of UNICEF’s work in the region. However, UNICEF has also managed to link innovative models to policy development and deeper reforms of education systems, with the result that the ethos of child-friendly schools is now embedded in sector plans. Last but not least, UNICEF has been successful in leveraging funds and partner expertise for education inclusion in most countries.

The MCE on the **right of children to live in a caring and supportive family environment** highlighted the importance of building programmes to reform child care on a solid foundation of political engagement. This was achieved during the Sofia conference in 2012, which continues to influence a great deal of progress in child-care reform in all CEE/CIS countries. The MCE also demonstrated that the shift to the prevention of family separation has not yet been achieved in all countries of the region. In practice, the efforts of professionals and policy makers on the development of alternative care has been more successful than intensifying efforts to prevent separation. In most countries, professional norms remained a major bottleneck to progress and this was most pronounced in relation to doctors and nurses and their attitudes towards children with disabilities. The continued prevalence, if not dominance, of a medical model of disability means that, a significant proportion of medical staff, particularly doctors, continue to believe that children with disabilities may be better off in institutions where specialist medical support facilities may be available.

A number of lessons have also been learned from the MCE on **juvenile justice**. First, UNICEF has made a positive contribution to decreasing detention rates of children in the countries participating in the MCE and these efforts have contributed, indirectly, to a narrowing of the equity gap in juvenile justice. Some determinants (having adequate legislation and policies in place; access to adequately staffed services; conducive social norms) seemed to be more likely to have a catalyst or leverage effect, and were
associated with consistently with positive results. However, in most countries of the region, the gaps between legislation and its actual implementation represent a greater obstacle to juvenile justice reforms than shortcomings in the legislative and regulatory framework. The MCE findings suggest that UNICEF needs to further define and assess the different categories of vulnerability of children in conflict with the law, rather than considering them as one ‘homogeneous’ vulnerable group. UNICEF also needs to clarify the terms used in the theory of change as these are not understood consistently by staff, which makes it difficult to establish a common vision.

On **home-visiting**, the close collaboration of the RKLA’s International Technical Advisory Group has enhanced the dissemination of knowledge across the region and has provided a continuous motivational force to improve **home-visiting systems**. A stronger lead role for COs on the defined activities of the workplan might increase commitment and the rate of progress. Given the multi-sectoral nature of this RKLA, the fact that a group of experts is becoming attuned to the region’s context and needs, as well as the high level of demand for their technical assistance requires more efficient and effective systems to contract these experts as needed.

### 3.4 Additional GRP-related reporting: Global evaluation and research database

UNICEF, 2014, [Realizing the rights of Roma children and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia](https://www.unicef.org/). Summary analysis of key findings from MICS surveys in Roma settlements in the three countries, Insights 2/2014.

UNICEF, 2014, [Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in the Europe and Central Asia region](https://www.unicef.org/). Background note to the Beijing+20

More documents can be found in the [Global Evaluation and Research Database](https://www.unicef.org/).
Part 4: Analysis of organizational effectiveness and efficiency results

4.1 Evaluation

Technical support related to child-rights monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was provided by the RO to a large number of offices in the region in 2014, and a number of missions were undertaken to: (a) review 21 annual integrated monitoring and evaluation plans (IMEPs) and recommend areas for improvement; (b) help offices design M&E elements under their new CPDs, results and resources frameworks (RRFs)/Costed Evaluation Plans (CEPs): (c) contribute to mid-term review reflections; (d) assist in recruitment processes related for M&E posts (Albania, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan) and facilitate surge re-deployments for emergency programmes (Turkey and Ukraine); and (e) assist COs to capture good practices and successes in contributing to equity gap reduction (MoRES briefs and case studies).

A network meeting of M&E specialists was organized by the RO in the last quarter of 2014, including several deputy representatives – to share experiences and to continue to build a common vision for UNICEF’s research, child-rights monitoring and evaluation-related work in the region, with training on methodologies for undertaking impact evaluation an important component of the meeting. Other opportunities for sharing experiences were created in 2014, including the establishment of a Yammer platform for the M&E network in the region.

Technical support and advice was provided throughout the year to COs undertaking evaluations and the RO provided oversight for the implementation of the IMEP, promoting the use of the external quality assurance system and prompting COs to work toward the timely implementation of the plan. Results in terms of the quality of evaluations are very positive. Nevertheless, as in other years, the RO notes a significant under-delivery on the implementation of the IMEP (of the 221 IMEP activities planned in 2014, COs reported less than 50 per cent completion as of December 2014\(^9\)), in particular planned research and studies. Support for COs to develop realistic and prioritized plans for research and child-rights M&E is a high priority for the RO in 2015.

In the context of a general mid-term review of the regional strategy (RKLA) and in consideration of UNICEF’s transforming engagement in the region, the RO has begun to prepare a data, research, evaluation and monitoring strategy for the region that aims to maximize the use of limited financial and human resources and capitalize on existing expertise both within UNICEF and among partners. A new online IMEP platform (called PRIME) will be an important new systems tool, which will significantly enhance the RO’s capacity to support, provide oversight for, and promote synergies across planned child-rights M&E and research efforts in the region. A critical component of the strategy and related action plan will be the establishment of a quality assurance system for research and knowledge generation – recognizing that solid evidence is essential for effective advocacy in the region and beyond.

4.2 Management and operations

Under the Outcome 800 Support-Management, the accountability of the RO for governance, oversight, quality assurance, technical assistance, advocacy and strategic engagement is coordinated through a

\(^9\) COs reported that an additional 20 per cent of the planned activities will be completed before the end of January 2015.
number of RO and CEE/CIS regional committees, which provide advice and support to the Regional Director in delivering on the RO’s accountability. The terms of reference and composition of these committees are reviewed and updated annually – in 2014 these were finalized as part of the Annual Management Plan (AMP).

The Regional Management Team (RMT) remained the main forum for discussion and guidance on UNICEF’s engagement in the region, in particular looking at how to implement UNICEF global strategies (in 2014, primarily the Strategic Plan (SP), Communications and Public Advocacy, Regional Management (RM) strategies and others) and policies in CEE/CIS, and for strengthening consensus around results for children. It met twice in 2014: in Geneva in May and in Yerevan in October. The RMT continued, through 10 regional reference groups, each chaired by a representative and supportive by a regional adviser, to assess and guide the achievement of results for children in the region, especially for the most vulnerable groups. The second RMT meeting reviewed the findings of two of the five on-going MCEs that had been completed and their implications for programming and for the targeting of UNICEF investments. The RMT also agreed on how to disseminate the findings of the MCEs to highlight impact results, system-level changes and UNICEF’s contribution to both. These results provide the much-needed evidence to influence national policies, priorities and development of equitable services.

The RMT also agreed on the process for translating technical knowledge to clear advocacy messages for different stakeholders. In the contexts of the post-2015 sustainable development goals and UNICEF’s SP 2014-2017, the RMT agreed on how to ensure that new CPDs, as well as our contributions to UNDAF results, contribute to global targets for children, including the achievement of equity. The RMT reviewed human and financial resource allocations, as well as office management, including the implementation of audit recommendations and the maintenance of efficiency and effectiveness in operations. Between meetings, the RMT and the Regional Staff Association have been regularly informed of key global discussions, including through feedback by the Regional Director from the discussions in the Global Management Team (GMT).

The Regional Office Management Team (ROMT) functioned as the RO’s management body, covering all management-related issues as well as more substantive and programmatic issues. It provides advice and support to the Regional Director in delivering on the RO’s accountabilities and exercising leadership in RO management, coordination and activities, including the leadership agenda in the region, strategic decisions and recommendations on budget, oversight and governance. These functions are reflected in the revised terms of reference for the ROMT. The ROMT meets regularly and is chaired by either the Regional Director or, in her absence, the Deputy Regional Director. In 2014, the ROMT met 26 times – an average of twice a month. The ROMT also conducted a self-assessment review in the areas of programme management, governance and operations support in preparation for the 2014 internal audit of the RO.

**RO Team Work Weeks (TWWs)**, instituted in December 2011, are now fully integrated as key collaborative and inter-sectoral work opportunities for all RO staff. There were six TWWs in 2014 (January, March, May, June, September and November) that coincided with key annual milestones such as the GMT, Executive Board and the RMT meetings. The TWWs have enabled the development and nurturing of a more coherent and commonly shared understanding of programmatic priorities among all RO staff. The TWWs – together with the introduction of the RKLA – have led to greatly improved coherence within the RO, resulting in more cross-sectoral, coherent and strategic regional positioning and guidance.
In 2014, the RO continued to promote cross-office arrangements to better manage risk and to improve efficiencies among offices with limited operations staffing. These have included **in-country transaction processing centres:** Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) (Pristina for Zvecan); Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek for Osh); Kazakhstan (Astana on behalf of the RO the zone office in Almaty); and Ukraine (Kyiv for a new zone office established in 2014 in Kharkiv to support the emergency response). In addition, other offices have provided **cross-border** support, with Armenia supporting financial transactions for Sokhumi in Abkhazia, Georgia, given the political insecurities in the country, and operations staff from several COs volunteering for assignments to support the response to the Ukraine emergency. In **Georgia**, as the result of an internal audit recommendation, all VISION transactions were deployed to the staff in the Sokhumi Zone Office.

Finally, CEE/CIS continues its programme of **mentoring and peer reviews** coordinated by the RO. In 2014, there were 13 support missions between offices and including two support missions to the Regional Office.

The RO provided support to the implementation of **VISION and the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC)** in 2014. The two VISION Subject Matter Experts (SME) posts scheduled to terminate at the end of 2013 were extended into the first quarter of 2014 to support the transition to VISION. Despite the discontinuation of the SME function, VISION was not reported as a particular concern by any offices in the region. Offices continue to help each other and also to enjoy support from IT-Common Services/Geneva. Offices appreciate the enhancements to VISION that simplify transaction processing, including replenishment procedures and the automated banking system that has reduced the time spent on routine reconciliations and payments.

The RO fully supports the strategic intent of the GSSC to relieve the COs from routine, time-consuming transactions, aiming to promote efficiency and effectiveness at the CO level. The RO conducted an in-depth review of staff workload related to transactions that could be moved to the GSSC to ensure, to the extent possible, that the transition to GSSC is implemented with little disruption to the continuity and quality of our offices’ support to results for children and without any reduction in the coverage and quality of our risk management and oversight practices. The review demonstrated that the staff workload within the region was not as great as initially calculated by HQ. This helped the Regional PBR in its review of the CO submissions to address the shift of transactions to the GSSC. The CEE/CIS Region is very engaged in the roll-out exercise to ensure that added tasks, including translations, scanning, etc. do not reverse potential opportunities for efficiencies at the CO level. Office operations managers are appointed as GSSC office leads in the region. In addition to the regular Global implementation Group Lync sessions, a separate Lync session was held to brief operations managers on the status of the GSSC, as well as the next steps and actions required from them.

**Long-term arrangements for procurement** also came under scrutiny in 2014. As part of continued efforts to increase cost efficiencies, a number of steps were taken by CEE/CIS offices in 2014 to expand the use of inter-agency agreements, including long-term arrangements (LTAs), in different categories: travel; couriers; cleaning; security; hotel services; and telecommunication services. These LTAs reduced workload by eliminating duplication in procurement processes. They also provided concrete cost saving by combining volumes with other UN agencies. A total of 11 offices reported new or continuing inter-agency LTAs – many of them focused on office supplies, security services, travel, mail, cellular telephones and translating services. Three out of the 11 offices reporting joint LTAs identified UNICEF savings that totalled $298,884 in 2014.
The RO continued the practice of using the **online procurement of airline and train tickets**, using the corporate credit cards introduced in 2013. This saves money when buying tickets for low-cost carriers, trains, long-haul flights, and business-class travel. In 2015, the RO plans to review the possible expansion of the use of credit cards for other procurement activities and by COs that have expressed interest in this method of payment.

The IT Section in Geneva continues to provide support to meet the needs of the CEE/CIS Region and the RO on **information and communications technology (ICT)**. The Section serves as an infrastructure hub for UNICEF’s virtual private network (VPN) and system-hosting support for the countries in the region that run key mission-critical services like email, VISION Access, and the Intranet. During 2014, the availability of these systems was as per industry standard Service Level Agreements of 99.9 per cent. CEE/CIS was the first region to initiate and complete the rollout of Office 365-based e-mail and online collaboration solution in UNICEF. Support has also been provided to address the recommendations of the website security audit in UNICEF. The IT section has also been providing second-level helpdesk and system administration support to UNICEF offices across the region. Approximately 750 service calls for both IT and business applications (VISION) have been recorded and completed in the service manager registry.

**Procurement services** continued their upward trend in the region, increasing by 24 per cent from 2013 to 2014 to a total of $34.7 million (up by 42 per cent since the 2012 baseline of $24.5 million). These services relate primarily to vaccines/biologicals and pharmaceuticals, with antiretrovirals and products prominent.

A number of good practices were followed in the region in 2014. The Armenia CO continued to support the Government of Armenia and other partners in procurement services. The Azerbaijan CO assisted national partners, namely the Ministry of Health and GAVI (the Vaccine Alliance), to use procurement service assistance in 2014. The Georgia CO continued to provide procurement services in line with its Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Georgia, and the Government decided to expand this activity to a number of non-routine vaccines, including rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin. In Kazakhstan, the Government committed to procure vaccines, pharmaceuticals and medical supplies through UNICEF in 2015. The office in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) is supporting the Ministry of Health in the procurement of vaccines and antiretroviral medicines through Supply Division channels. In Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Health uses UNICEF procurement services to supply GAVI vaccines and food fortification supplies. The Moldova CO continued to provide in-country support related to the procurement of vaccines through GAVI on behalf of the National Centre for Public Health, in addition to cold chain equipment to ensure the proper vaccine storage and distribution in the Transnistrian region. The Tajikistan CO continued to facilitate procurement services between Supply Division, the Government and international agencies. The Turkey CO supported the Ministry of Health for the clearance of offshore shipments related to the Syria emergency. In Turkmenistan, the procurement of vaccines, premix for flour fortification and HIV tests uses UNICEF procurement services. Finally, the Uzbekistan CO assisted the Ministry of Health in ensuring the smooth processing and monitoring of vaccines delivery in the country and facilitated in-kind donation of Vitamin A that reached 99 per cent of children age 6-59 months.

### 4.3 Oversight function and related accountabilities

**Monitoring of key performance indicators**
The RO continued to publish the Monthly Monitor, introduced in 2012, to monitor Country and Regional Office programme and operations performance. The Monitor, which is shared with COs and among RO staff, evaluates nine performance areas: (a) core resources management (allocation and utilization), (b) donor reporting; (c) grants expiring, (d) Direct Cash Transfers; (e) audit observations; (f) premises; (g) regional contingency fund; (h) travel (for the RO, only); and (i) outstanding budgetary obligations (for the RO, only). The Monitor also includes a monthly action tracker that raises key points for the attention of COs and subsequent RO follow-up. Several COs report that they appreciate this tool, which supports their appropriate and timely action for exceptions. In addition, several COs have established complementary mechanisms for their own monitoring and oversight needs.

However, given the introduction of Insight platforms and its dashboards, the RO needs to redesign the Monthly Monitor to ensure that it does not become redundant. This was discussed at the annual meeting of the operations managers and at the October 2014 RMT. The RO will review the key performance indicators and design in consultation with COs in early-2015, with a view to creating a new version of the Monthly Monitor.

At the October RMT, the RO initiated the publication of two-page reports on the key indicators for each CO to be discussed in bilateral meetings between the Regional Director and representatives. These reports list the exceptions and issues of concern around implementation rates of all types of funds, the segregation of duties, assessment of the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) of implementing partners and outstanding DCTs, inventory aging, travel authorizations that remain open for more than 15 days after the completion of travel, expiring grants, fleet aging, and status of audit. The reports also identify areas of higher CO performance. This proved to be a good practice and the RO will continue to generate this report together with the redesigned Monthly Monitor.

Most offices in the region face unpredictable OR funding together with minimum ceilings for regular resources (RR) and limited institutional budget (IB) allocations. The region continued the realignment of core resources to core roles to ensure that its core mission is maintained in the event of fluctuations in OR funding. In addition, the Regional Contingency Fund continued to fill critical gaps in the IB.

Quality assurance for donor proposals and reports

In January 2014, the RO started to implement an updated monitoring mechanism for the quality of donor proposals and reports. Priority was given to reviewing and providing feedback to offices on donor proposals of $500,000 or more. The RO also monitored the quality of donor reports by reviewing and providing comments on at least one donor report per office per year. Building on lessons learned, and in order to further improve the review process by taking a risked-informed approach, the RMT approved revised guidelines for quality assurance of donor proposals and reports in November 2014. The revised RO process increases the threshold for RO review of donor proposals to $1,000,000 and extends the period for the RO to provide timely and quality feedback. It also requests all offices to submit a list of donor proposals that are in the pipeline twice a year and notes that some donor proposals might require special attention, and will, therefore, be reviewed regardless of the threshold.

Audits

In 2014, four Offices (19 per cent of those in the region) and the RO were audited by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). The RO and Turkey Office audits were conducted on-site,
while audits for Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan COs were conducted off-site. The Belarus Office was audited off-site in 2013 followed by a one week on-site review in 2014. The Turkmenistan Office audit received an ‘Unqualified’ rating and the other four audits were rated as ‘Qualified conclusion, moderate’. The audits of the four Offices and the RO resulted in 59 audit recommendations. Six (10 per cent) of the recommendations were high priority, two of which related to the monitoring of programme activities in the field, two to contract management, one to strategic partnership engagement and one to ICT reporting, accountability and oversight. All other recommendations were medium priority. All of the audits concluded that control processes were established and functioning.

An analysis of the four office audits found that 40 per cent of the recommendations related to programme management: 32.5 per cent to governance; and 27.5 per cent to operations support. The RO continued to provide careful support to offices during audits by participating in entrance and exit meetings and supporting offices in the development and implementation of action plans when requested to do so. At the end of 2014, only two offices had open action points from the audits of the previous year and these were expected to be resolved in early 2015.

4.4 Harmonized approach to cash transfers (HA CT) to implementing partners

The RO analysis of HACT assurance in the region found that offices need to better understand the tools at their disposal, to focus management attention on risk areas and redirect management time and effort to the application of appropriate assessment and assurance procedures to partners. For example, and as per the regional dashboard, only 13 of the 21 Offices provided input to the HACT Status Report in Insight by the end of 2014. In addition, the RO recognizes the need to develop a comprehensive oversight, monitoring, and reporting mechanism for HACT activities in the region and to ensure HACT compliance.

To address these issues, the RO has established an action plan to guide offices towards full compliance with HACT policy and procedures, particularly by strengthening its assessment, assurance, monitoring, regional oversight and consolidated reporting, as well as developing credible partnerships with supreme audit institutions at the CO level.

In 2014, the RO HACT plan included the distribution of the special funds of $250,000 received from HQ, in addition to earmarked funds of $18,000 from Management for Results. As of the end of December 2014, $127,500 has been distributed to jump-start assessments (macro and micro) and assurance plans in the COs, $73,000 had been allocated for a regional training of key staff, and the balance of $67,500 was earmarked for a consultant to assist the region in developing mechanisms for HACT management and oversight. The Regional Chief of Operations briefed the RMT on HACT Action, the recently revised framework and policy, and the regional plan at the RMT meeting in Yerevan in October 2014.

Delegated Funds Reservations (FRs) were issued for the COs to conduct macro and micro assessments. The annual meeting of the operations managers in the region, held from 29 September to 3 October 2014, included a joint three-day training on HACT for operations managers and deputy representatives, who in turn will train CO staff and national counterparts. The on-site training has been reinforced with the launch of a new HACT e-learning course. As of the end of December 2014, a total of $148,365 was committed. The balance is being carried forward for use in 2015.

Recommendations and action points were identified at the regional HACT training, including the need to accelerate the assessment of global partners for use at the field office level. Offices were urged to
complete the macro-assessment plans by mid-2015, ensure completion of the HACT Status Report in *Insight*, appoint HACT focal points, complete their assessment and assurance plans for 2015, identify service providers to conduct micro-assessment, and to accelerate the use of the delegated FRs before the end of 2014. It was also emphasized that offices should ensure the identification of funding sources in future budget plans to carry out the micro assessments. Progress on these recommendations will be closely monitored in 2015 to improve both CO reporting and to confirm the accuracy of the dashboard report itself.

One key concern was to secure a consultant who is conversant in HACT to lead the region in developing the management and oversight plan, given the high global demands placed on such a profile. The RO will continue to ensure that such a consultant is on board to finalize the action plan. In the meantime, the recently-endorsed Regional Office Operations Oversight Team (ROOOT) will review HACT action on a regular basis and report back to the ROMT on noteworthy exceptions.

### 4.5 Inter-agency collaboration

UNICEF made an active contribution in 2014 to the regional inter-governmental consultations convened under the auspices of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the UNDG for Europe and Central Asia (UNDG-ECA).

UNICEF was part of the panel at the Regional Ministerial Consultation on Participatory Monitoring for Accountability for the Post-2015 Agenda in September 2015. UNICEF also played an active role in the preparation for the Beijing +20 Regional Review Meeting organized by UNECE in November 2014, preparing the official background document for the session on preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, and coordinating the organization of the session on governance and gender justice. UNICEF’s substantive contribution to the success of the review meeting received special recognition from the Executive Secretary of UNECE in his opening remarks.

The Regional Directors Team (UNDG Europe and Central Asia) and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) met twice in 2014 at 1.5 day meetings organized back-to-back, in line with the now established practice in the region. The collaboration between the two coordination mechanisms is excellent and collegial, with many activities being undertaken jointly as R-UNDG/RCM initiatives.

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina rolled out its Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UN Development Assistance Framework with flexible and contextualized standard operating procedures (SOPs) in 2013, another 12 offices are following suit in 2014/2015, as requested by the last Quadriennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). It is becoming increasingly important in CEE/CIS – where partnerships with host governments are evolving beyond programme assistance – that UNICEF remains focused on implementing elements of the SOPs that add value in the development context in which the UN operates. This means paying attention to reducing complexities, focusing on enabling agencies to deliver their support to governments and work with civil society, and recognizing that UNICEF’s engagement is expanding beyond borders to facilitate horizontal cooperation among countries, which is not a feature of UNDAFs. The last meeting of regional directors emphasized the importance of joint host country-UN ownership of the UNDAF priorities, rather than making the UN system alone accountable for the intended results.
The RO continued to strengthen the ‘HQ/RO/CO compact’ in positioning the organization for the effective delivery of UNICEF’s mandate. In 2014, the RO continued to provide systematic and substantive feedback to the Regional UNCT-ECA CCA\(^{10}\) and to the UNDAF Peer Support Group (PSG) for all 11 UNDAFs that are being rolled out in 2014/2015.

From 2016 onwards, 13 Offices will be applying relevant elements of the SOPs to varying degrees. The main challenge that will require close monitoring is how well the new governance systems provided for by the SOPs enable each agency in a country to discharge its mandate more efficiently and continue to provide effective support to host governments, given that the SOPs introduce new and more complex modalities of planning, monitoring and reporting (i.e. joint work plans and results groups). In addition, the more formal reporting structures (i.e. joint steering committees) might present a challenge, particularly in administratively centralized countries, in terms of UNICEF’s ability to interact with civil society and to facilitate or even protect its independent voice for children and young people.

\(^{10}\) United Nations Country Team – ECA Common Country Assessment