### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECARO</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACT</td>
<td>Harmonized approach to cash transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters (UNICEF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Overseas Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBR</td>
<td>Programme budget review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Human resource development committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Sexual exploitation and abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Situation update: regional trends that affect children and women

Inequality continues to be a concern in Europe and Central Asia region, with a shrinking middle class, high levels of informal and vulnerable employment, gaps in social protection, emigration of skilled and young workers, and perceptions of inequality before the law. While the gap in basic living standards is narrowing, new forms of inequalities are emerging, caused by uneven access to technology and education, and exacerbated among poorer and more vulnerable groups by the climate crisis.¹

Growth decelerated to 2.2 per cent in the region in 2019, reflecting weakness in the region’s two largest economies, Turkey and the Russian Federation. Earlier financial market stress resulted in a sharp slowdown of growth in Turkey; while activity in Russia was tepid amid weak demand and cuts in oil production.² Most of the region retained its middle-income status, with Georgia and Kosovo³ moving from lower-middle income to upper-middle income status.⁴

Countries in Europe and Central Asia have reduced child mortality, with under-five deaths more than halved since 1990. Access to quality obstetric, antenatal and post-natal care and early initiation of (and exclusive) breastfeeding continue to be challenging; in 2019 only 33 per cent of infants in the region were exclusively breastfed during their first six months – one of the lowest rates in the world.⁵ More than 500,000 children have missed out on routine measles vaccination, and many countries across the region continue to face outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases that threaten children’s lives and well-being. In 2019, 88,554 cases of measles were reported in the region.

The biggest gaps in enrolment in education in the region are seen at the two ends of the education spectrum, with 1.3 million children missing out on one year of pre-primary education, and 2 million missing out on secondary school. At least 75 per cent of the roughly 5.1 million children living with disabilities in Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia are excluded from quality, inclusive education, with hundreds of thousands remaining in ‘special’ schools, segregated from their peers and communities.⁶

The European Union (EU) and European institutions, international financial institutions (IFIs), the private sector and the Russian Federation are key players influencing and supporting programmes to overcome political and social-economic challenges. The EU is preparing its next Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2020, which will promote the 2030 Agenda in both EU external and internal action, support Western Balkans countries towards EU accession and develop closer relations with the eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia. The EU is currently focusing more on economic development and growth, and increasingly on migration and security: this could potentially lead to diversion of more official development assistance to these areas.

In-depth partnerships will be required with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, to reinforce the principle of leaving no one / no child behind. In recognition of this, in 2019 the United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF’s) Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) actively engaged in establishing new partnerships with other United Nations entities, including the International Labour Organization’s Regional Office, to address the young people’s agenda. EU accession is high on the political agendas of many countries in the Western Balkans, and country offices are advocating for child rights reforms to be at the core of the pre-accession agenda. Meanwhile ECARO has started strengthening and amplifying its engagement with the EU to create political space for

² World Bank, Regional Economic Outlook Europe and Central Asia
³ All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
⁴ World Bank, New Country Classifications by Income Level
children and for policy advocacy, programmatic engagement and resource mobilization for fundraising, for joint efforts and for leveraging resources for children in the region. Similarly, ECARO has started strengthening its partnerships with the World Bank and regional development banks, with foundations, and with the Russian Federation.

Humanitarian needs for children and their families are significant in the region. In eastern Ukraine, 3.4 million people, including 430,000 children, are bearing the brunt of the five-year, protracted conflict, with direct threats to their physical and mental well-being, and limited access to basic services. In 2019, some 120,260 refugees and migrants – over a quarter of them children – arrived in Europe. Refugee and migrant children – particularly girls and boys traveling alone – are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including gender-based violence.

In this context, it is increasingly important to ensure that UNICEF’s comparative advantages and contributions are well recognized in the region. ECARO has developed a focused set of four regional flagship results that make a clear, concise and compelling argument to strategic partners about UNICEF’s role and comparative advantage in the region. UNICEF will continue to deliver results for children at scale based on application of validated innovative models and using an inter-sectoral approach.

2. Key results achieved against the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP)

The ECARO management adopted four Regional Flagship Results for ROMP years 2018-2021, formulated in line with the principles and priorities in UNICEF’s Strategic Plan.

**Goal Area 1: Thriving: Health, Immunization, Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (ECD)**

During 2019, priority countries – mainly in Central Asia and the Caucasus – were supported to strengthen health policy and system capacities to sustainably improve maternal and newborn health care services with a focus on disparity reduction. This utilized the Every Newborn Action Plan systematic approach, introduced and launched in eight countries. The main areas of improvement in 2019 were maternal and newborn health metrics and perinatal health audit systems (in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan), costing of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health plans (in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), and development of community engagement strategies on maternal and child health.

Coordinated support was provided to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to enhance maternal nutrition to prevent low birthweight and other birth defects. This included introduction of universal iron and folic acid supplementation in the short term; policy advocacy for integrating nutrition counselling into antenatal care; and policy support for long-term development and scaling-up of flour fortification, notably in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. UNICEF reintroduced nutrition programming across the region, with 17 priority countries supported to strengthen nutrition sector governance and capacity to prevent the double burden of malnutrition across: early years; school-age and adolescence; and womanhood.

Accelerated work on breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding (IYCF), in the framework of the Decade of Action on IYCF, improved breastfeeding outcome indicators by 27 per cent, and scores related to the enabling environment for breastfeeding by 8 per cent. During this period Turkmenistan, Romania, Croatia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan strengthened their legislation to protect breastfeeding.

Ten countries were supported to devise and implement actions or programmes to prevent overweight and obesity among school-age children and adolescents, and six countries were supported to enforce Universal

---

Salt Iodization (USI) Programmes. Ukraine, the only country in the region without national legislation, was supported by ECARO to draft and review a national law on mandatory USI.

The immunization programme focused on removing critical supply- and demand-related bottlenecks, especially at sub-national level. To address low immunization coverage, sub-national improvement plans were developed and costed for Ukraine, Romania and Moldova, based on root-cause analysis. To support countries to address demand-related bottlenecks, a training package was finalized on Interpersonal Communication for Immunization and translated into Russian; and a module on immunization for home visitors and a gender immunization toolkit were developed. More countries in the region now have communications plans in place to address vaccine hesitancy.

Joint ECARO, Supply Division and country office support for strengthening capacities for vaccine procurement, planning and forecasting led to a fall in the number of countries with stock outs to three. Regional coverage with DTP3 remains unchanged at 93 per cent, but eight countries have DTP3 coverage at district level below 80 per cent. Nonetheless, the number of underperforming districts has fallen in several countries, including Georgia, Romania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite high regional measles vaccination coverage (96 per cent for the first dose), 2019 saw the largest measles outbreak in the region in the last two decades, with over 88,000 cases and 34 deaths, indicating a need for more focused and tailored efforts to increase immunization coverage.

The overarching goal of early childhood development (ECD) work was to change health systems’ understanding and practice and to expand their focus from physical health to effectively supporting child development and wellbeing. The Early Moments Matter campaign and multiple CO initiatives and events in 11 countries increased awareness of ECD’s importance and the need to mainstream child development into health systems and services; and countries committed to improving health system support to ECD. UNICEF also supported reform of home visiting in 16 countries and conducted a multi-country evaluation of progress so far. Strategic guidance was developed and disseminated on early childhood intervention (ECI) for COs on how to universalize developmental monitoring and introduce ECI based on the social model of disability, and countries were supported to start implementation. The bottleneck is that the medical model and specialized rehabilitation services are understood to be ECI.

UNICEF and partners supported Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan to progress towards eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, and towards improving the quality of paediatric and adolescent HIV care. The countries have reviewed progress and developed roadmaps for eliminating mother-to-child transmission and have been provided with support to validate results and obtain certification.

**Goal Area 2: Learning: Education**

In 2019, ECARO organized consultations with officials, teacher unions, academia, teachers, and children in eight countries to feed back on the Global Education Strategy. To ensure alignment with the Global Education Strategy: the regional education agenda was revised towards a unified agenda for quality inclusive education; the regional education database was updated to reflect focus on learning and the link with SDG4; and guidance was drafted on second decade education.

ECARO expanded support to countries for evidence-based policy making. Education sector analysis was finalized in Moldova and is ongoing in Montenegro. Joint OECD/UNICEF thematic reviews were finalized in Albania, Georgia and Serbia and are being prepared in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Recommendations from a 2018 review were used to launch broad education reform in North Macedonia. A side event was organized at the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training. In the last quarter, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and UNICEF commenced secondary analysis of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results for the Western Balkans.
countries.

The Regional Teacher Education Training Package (RTTP) is being expanded with a module on embracing the diversity of learners, a gender-equality lens, and modules on dropout prevention. The RTTP is supporting teacher education reforms in several countries: in BiH one more university adopted the package, while in Croatia five universities were supported to start embedding it in curricula. Inclusive education is now a priority in all ECA countries: national plans were developed in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; in Serbia, a national evaluation report was developed and reform of special education launched, in Moldova the inclusive education programme was evaluated, and in Belarus significant funding was mobilized for comprehensive inclusive education reforms.

To harness the potential of technology to address specific learning challenge in ECA, LearnIn – a blended learning approach to improving teacher education based on the RTTP – was designed. This will be implemented in Albania, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Tajikistan.

Comprehensive early childhood education (ECE) diagnostic exercises in the region resulted in nationally owned ECE action plans. A synthesis report and case studies were completed and disseminated based on the multi-country research into decentralization of ECE systems. Kyrgyzstan launched the global Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative nationally, conducting planning workshops with national stakeholders to develop an early childhood education subsector plan. Tajikistan replicated the process in-country. Croatia was supported to study financing modalities for expanding ECE. To strengthen demand for ECE, a module was developed for frontline workers on ECE’s importance and how to encourage parents to enrol children. COs were supported to plan initiatives for including marginalized children into pre-primary education and to introduce monitoring tools to systematically measure outcomes. An affordable assistive technology solution for children with communication difficulties was successfully piloted in three pilot countries, with a regional online training package developed; children are already using the tools. In the region, 840,000 young children could benefit from these solutions once they are widely available.

**Goal Areas 3 & 5 Protecting: Protection, Social Protection and Migration**

ECARO’s contribution to these goal areas mainly focused on supporting country offices to address children in institutional care (particularly children with disabilities), social inclusion, strengthening social protection systems, child poverty analysis, and migration.

The region continues to have the highest levels of children in institutional care globally. Children with disabilities are over-represented. In 2019, ECARO focused on ensuring that the next Multiannual financial framework (MFF) of the EU covering 2021-2027 reflects the policy priority of de-institutionalization. Increased policy engagement with the European Commission (EC) around the importance of child care reform in both its internal action for member states and its external assistance has helped to ensure that legal and financial commitments to de-institutionalization continue in the next MFF. This policy engagement has also further positioned UNICEF as the EC’s partner of choice on child protection and child poverty. ECARO was contracted by the EC to support the Slovak Republic’s child care reform work, and was selected in 2019 to pilot the EU’s Child Guarantee, starting in 2020 in seven EU member states. The increased policy engagement has also contributed to positioning country offices across the region as an implementing partner.

Child poverty continues to be a key driver of inequities and social exclusion across the region, and contributes to high rates of family separation and institutionalization. During 2019 a sub-regional workshop was organized on child poverty measurement for national statistics agencies from five countries. The training has had positive results, with at least two countries moving forward on introducing a multidimensional poverty measure. ECARO released regional mapping of disability-sensitive social protection, which was accompanied by a checklist to support design and implementation of disability-inclusive social protection. To build countries’ capacities for shock-responsive social protection, a workshop was jointly organized with the
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for Central Asian countries. The sub-regional workshop brought together representatives of all five Central Asian Governments, Red Crescent Societies and UNICEF to learn, exchange experiences and discuss how to make social protection systems more shock responsive.

In 2019, 120,600 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe, one quarter of them children. The increased arrivals observed on the Greek islands and in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted in deteriorated situations, with overcrowding, unsafe accommodations and limited access to services. UNICEF nevertheless reached more than 33,000 children with a comprehensive package of services, while strengthening national systems. Of them, 19,480 children had improved access to psychosocial support, case management, legal counselling, referral to other services. In total, 24,000 children were enrolled in formal and non-formal education, including early childhood education, and nearly 5,900 adolescents in Greece and Italy benefitted from enhanced participation in organized activities. Some 8,100 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and at-risk boys, girls, women and men also accessed GBV prevention and response services.

UNICEF technical assistance to government partners resulted in improved child protection legal and policy frameworks with regard to community-based care, guardianship, legal aid and protection safeguards across the region. In 2019, UNICEF completed analysis of available data on children left behind, and produced technical guidance on mitigating the negative effects of parental migration.

International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) and UNICEF jointly provided policy advice and advocated with Government on issues such as statelessness, access to education and adequate protection for unaccompanied boys and girls.

2.1 Gender dimension

Country offices continued to engage in Gender Programme Reviews (GPRs) to refine visions and prioritize investments across Regional Flagship Results and in developing Country Programme Documents (CPDs). Kosovo completed a full GPR this year and several COs integrated variations on GPRs in CPD missions (BiH) and Country Programme Evaluations (Serbia and Turkey).

Additional gender resources were infused in the planning tools for CPD development. These include the development of the ECARO Gender Toolkit by an advisory committee of RO and CO staff, who together identified the links to gender and regional flagship results. This tool should further strengthen CPD development and staff capacity building in 2021 and 2022.

To strengthen use of the evidence and gender analysis to translate data into action, five more Gender Focal points and RO staff have enrolled in or completed the GenderPro certificate programme, and the RO has adopted a strategy to integrate gender in the Regional Learning Platform.

2.2 Humanitarian situations

There was continued focus on strengthening and operationalizing emergency preparedness and response capacity for the region. All 21 countries in the region were supported to sustain compliance with UNICEF’s Global Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response (EPP). To better anticipate and prepare for potential emergencies, regional risk monitoring and analysis was strengthened through the contracting and disseminating of monthly political, security and contextual analysis. In coordination with the migration team, an enhanced, monthly active risk monitoring system for refugee and migrant movements, including early warning indicators and triggers for response, was rolled out to cover the 10 European countries impacted by refugee/migrant flows.

To strengthen capacities for risk reduction and facilitate coordinated, early action for extremely high-risk hazard, UNICEF engaged in a new partnership with IFRC focused on earthquake preparedness in three Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). This partnership has facilitated practical support to
country preparedness (through supply prepositioning with the Red Crescent Societies), joint advocacy and resourcing with IFRC and coordinated training on cash-based responses and supply and logistics in earthquake emergencies.

2.3 Influencing global and regional discourse and policy

Partnerships

In 2019, ECARO continued to strengthen its partnership with the EU and its institutions, as the most strategic partners in the region. Strategic interactions with the EU and relevant EU institutions (such as the European Parliament) helped to build political space for UNICEF regional priorities, and influenced and leveraged policies for positioning UNICEF as a partner of choice. As a result, ECARO mobilized EUR 98,124,086 from the EU, equivalent to 26.44 per cent of the contracts that UNICEF signed with EU globally.

ECARO actively expanded its collaboration and engagement with international financial institutions across the region to share responsibility for supporting achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for children and jointly focus on addressing the disparities and promoting sustainable growth in the region through joint advocacy, coordinated programming and analytical services. Two new sub-regional initiatives, to introduce innovative financing models to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and fill in gaps in financing, were launched with the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank in Central Asia, to be taken forward in 2020.

ECARO has developed a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with three key objectives: i) to enhance collaboration for use of knowledge, technical expertise and best practices; ii) to support advocacy and mobilization for children’s well-being; and iii) to enhance regional and global dialogue and cooperation on the priority issues of maternal, child and adolescent health and development. By the end of 2019, UNICEF had signed four grant agreements for Armenia, Belarus, North Korea and Syria for a total of close to US$14 million.

ECARO continued to strengthen its capacity for expanding non-financial engagement with the private sector in the region. The Private Sector Fundraising and Partnerships section will serve as the basis to provide sustainable and unrestricted funding to implement country programmes, generate growing levels of resources from the private sector, and expand engagement with individual supporters and businesses beyond fundraising – supporting country offices to achieve results for children. A number of COs also began developing Resource Mobilization Strategies, with Armenia and Kazakhstan completing their strategies in 2019. As the ambition for the private sector grows in the region, and in fulfilment of the CPD process, COs completed or are in the process of completing private sector mapping. To this end, support was given to nine COs, with Serbia, Croatia and Armenia completing their mapping in 2019.

Working with Municipalities and Mayors

In November 2019, ECARO convened a “Mayors for Children” meeting, hosted by the City of Athens, Greece, and attended by 40 representatives of urban local governments from 18 countries across Europe and Central Asia Region. At the first-ever meeting of Mayors in the region that focused especially on programming results for the most excluded children and young people, participants learned more about the critical importance of urban local governments’ targeted programming for the youngest residents in their communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

The meeting was the launch of a new network of urban local governments in ECA region – a group of cities and towns that will work with UNICEF to help each other improve the lives of their children and young people.
The meeting was concluded with the signing of the Athens Pledge by all participants, confirming their commitment to children and young people.

**Communication**

In 2019, ECARO contributed actively to reinforcing the positioning of UNICEF as a leading child rights organization in the ECA region by enhancing the Office’s digital and social media reach; producing a range of high-quality, multimedia content; and continuously providing technical guidance to COs. ECARO’s online presence, now comprises two websites (English/Russian), Twitter (English), Facebook (Russian), Instagram (Russian) and YouTube. In 2019, ECARO’s websites in English and Russian had 346,977 users in 377,508 sessions with 475,839 page views. Social media also saw large increases in use. In 2019 ECARO produced a range of products, including a series of advocacy briefing notes and a Flagship Results booklet. Outreach to regional and international media outfits contributed to regular coverage of children’s issues.

**Knowledge management, data and research and evaluation**

Several planning processes have been made more efficient with the development of a series of digital platforms such as one for the development and review of work plans as well as Programme Strategy Notes and Country Programme Documents, using a peer-to-peer learning approach. Knowledge Management was further strengthened with the roll-out of the Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system. An ECARO communication page was set-up as an intranet platform with key resources around the RO’s annual priorities.

ECARO continued partnering with knowledge entities and academic institutions to combine intellect, resources, reach and impact. With Drexel University, an operational research model was designed for measuring social norm change related to children with disabilities. Other partnerships with universities resulted in child protection for frontline workers in Italy; new evidence on child poverty; and a new approach to gender analysis in education. UNICEF and the Almaty-based CESDRR collaborated to promote child-centred humanitarian action strategies for Central Asia. An analysis of Nordic countries’ responses to asylum-seeking children – the Children Uprooted campaign and the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts – have raised the profile of refugee and migrant children, while prioritizing issues of child immigration detention, returns and access to health and education with key partners such as the EU.

**United Nations Reform**

The United Nations is now one year into implementation of the new independent and empowered Resident Coordinator (RC) system. Along with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, UNICEF has participated in several Issue Based Coalitions (IBCs – United Nations inter-agency working groups), including on SDG data and monitoring, gender, youth, social protection, health, and migration. Two new regional IBCs have been established, one on Environment and Climate Change and on Sustainable Urban Development. The 15 United Nations entities represented in the Peer Support Group focused on providing quality assurance of CCA documents and Cooperation Framework documents, and on providing technical support during prioritization.

**2.4 Internal Management**

In 2019, ECARO continued providing oversight, strategic guidance and technical support to country offices on all operational areas (internal control, finance, administration, audit, the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), procurement services, supplies and supply financing, health systems strengthening and implementing partner management). This included network meetings (e.g. Operations, Deputy Representative and Operations (DROPS), human resources and HACT Network Meetings), regional supply community networking meetings online, five Technical Assistance and oversight missions in 2019 (Albania,
Belarus, Georgia, Romania and Greece), and remote support to all country offices to ensure efficiency gains, monitor operational performance and use good practice approaches to guide other countries in the region. ECARO met or exceeded the UNICEF performance standards for the key indicators on the Regional and Manager’s Dashboard at the end of 2019.

2.5 Cross-cutting strategies

Programme planning and monitoring

In the peak of CPD development for the cycle, the planning team took a comprehensive approach to support the 12 CPDs in process in 2019. Twelve countries received technical assistance to conduct MICS. The annual TransMonEE meeting, held with 115 participants from 28 countries, was co-organized with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights to strengthen child protection national administrative data systems. UNICEF partnered with Conference of European Statisticians members, Eurostat and UNECE, to create a 2020-2022 Task Force to address data gaps using or creating international standards. Conversations resumed with the Russian Federation (RosStat) around a three-year collaboration plan on statistics.

UNICEF ECARO strengthened the evaluation function during the year: the US$1,700,000 received from the Evaluation Pooled fund was distributed amongst 16 COs and ECARO. As a result, the region completed 20 evaluations, exceeding its target of 17. ECARO also exceeded the organizational expenditure target of 1 per cent, allocating 3.16 per cent to evaluations in 2019. One strategic Multi-Country Evaluation on Universal Progressive Home visiting and one Country Programme Evaluation (Serbia) were completed by ECARO, providing recommendations for strengthening programming.

Communication for Development (C4D)

In 2019, ECARO supported evidence-based and quality development and implementation of behaviour and social change interventions, explored new partnerships and documented effective approaches to support and sustain behaviour change at scale. With Oxford Policy Management support, ECARO finalized a study on social service workforce communication and community engagement competencies and training. The regional package on interpersonal communication for immunization was translated into Russian and used to train health professionals in four countries. A training module for teachers on interpersonal communication and community engagement to support inclusive education was developed and tested in Azerbaijan. ECARO established a partnership with local governments in 18 countries to make cities fit for children.

3 Lessons learned

• Despite efforts from and the support of both UNICEF and WHO, 2019 saw the highest number of measles cases in the region for the past two decades, with a total of 115,592 cases and 44 deaths reported by the countries in WHO’s Europe region during the year. This indicates a need for greater efforts and high-level advocacy, including addressing growing vaccine hesitancy. ECARO plans to add a new stream of work on social media to support these efforts.

• The 2018 PISA only showed improvement in learning levels in three countries in the region. There was a lot of debate and media coverage on the “PISA shock” across the region, but countries have failed to use this data to influence policies and reforms. UNICEF has therefore partnered with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to support countries in these processes. This builds on lessons learned from the positive experience in Bosnia and Hercegovina where UNICEF supported the Government in anticipation of the PISA results, resulting in a number of analytical works and constructive professional and public debates on the educational reforms needed in the country.
• Sustained engagement with the EU, in both its internal and its external agenda, is critical for advancing and sustaining results for children. In turning our work towards EU member states, UNICEF has observed demand for its technical support, convening, and advocacy. Regular follow up has been critical, with desk officers and policy officials in Brussels responsible for guiding the Commissions policies and investments in the social sector. Partnerships in Brussels with networks of civil society groups and NGOs, have also proved to be an effective means of coordinating advocacy. Alignment between social policy and child protection within ECARO has been important for joining up a shared agenda and maximizing impact.

• To increase connections between adolescents and their parents and caregivers, it is critical to strengthen programmes on the parenting of adolescents. Unlike for early years parenting, there is insufficient experience and best practices on how parents can be supported to build the resilience, connections, competence and wellbeing of adolescents. In 2019, five county offices (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Bulgaria and Montenegro) used the findings of the Regional Study Parenting Adolescents and Parenting Support Programmes in Six Eastern European Countries to put the topic in the public agenda. Regional collaboration was also established with the European Parents Association for joint advocacy at European level and the exchange of good practices between parents’ associations in Western Europe and countries in Europe and Central Asia. However, this area of work requires a lot more attention by UNICEF.

• There is a strong appetite in the region to engage with the private sector. However, ambition, potential, investment and capacity vary greatly across the region. ECARO will nurture and support ambition and investment in private sector partnerships, working closely in partnership with country offices. Meanwhile ECARO will hire a Child Rights and Business Specialist to bring expertise into its support for the development of private sector partnerships.