Romania is an upper-middle-income country and a European Union (EU) member. In 2017, the economy grew by almost 7 per cent, one of the highest growth rates in the EU, and this growth is forecast to continue in 2018. The main government priority remains economic growth. Over the last two decades, significant progress has been made in human development, however, major challenges remain as growth is not trickling down to all areas and people, leading to an increasing inequity. While budgets for social sectors increased slightly in 2017, these were not used for strategic investments, and Romania remains one of the EU countries with the lowest investments in education, health and social protection.

The latest data show an increase in children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, up from 46 per cent in 2015 to 49 per cent in 2016. The number of children who do not complete compulsory education is increasing, while 40 per cent who do finish are functionally illiterate. Infant and maternal mortality continue to be the highest in the EU; vaccination coverage is falling under 90 per cent for polio and under 75 per cent for others, with a measles outbreak killing 36 children. Large numbers of children continue to be separated from their parents, with many of them living in institutions, and tolerance for violence against children is widespread. Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected, such as Roma children, children with disabilities, children living in rural areas and those from poor families.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child released its most recent report on Romania in mid-2017, highlighting many of these issues and recalling many recommendations made in its previous report (2009) that remained unimplemented.

UNICEF continued to address these issues through its programmes, advocacy and public campaigns, such as the week-long, high-level activities for World Children’s Day. In total, UNICEF generated nine per cent of all children-related news in Romania – a significant increase compared to four per cent in 2016 – and almost doubled the news related to UNICEF activities and initiatives.

Intensive advocacy from UNICEF and other organisations achieved mixed results. Since the elections at the end 2016, there have been several major government reshuffles, with a new Prime Minister appointed at the end of June and several key ministries changing ministers. The Government’s focus is on major fiscal and judicial reforms and less on inclusive growth. Nevertheless, the Government promoted a few key pieces of legislation benefiting children, including the Law on Immunization and the Law on the Child Ombudsman. Romania also committed to undertaking a Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2018 and set up an Interdepartmental Task Force on Sustainable Development in the Prime Minister’s Office, of which UNICEF is an actively contributing member.

UNICEF’s programme remained on course despite the changes, with the modelling work on the minimum package of services (MPS) and quality inclusive education (QIE) progressing as planned. Further capacity development of teams of community social workers, nurses and
The findings of a joint UNICEF/Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Ministry of Education (MoE) review of the education assessment and evaluation system were released in June. UNICEF provided technical assistance to translate the recommendations into a national action plan, which is key to education sector reform. A regional technical workshop was organized to present the review and action plan in the Europe and Central Asia Region, with Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia participating. Key recommendations of the report were also included in the European Commission’s Education and Training Monitor Romania 2017.

The Romanian Agency for International Development (RoAID) was established at the end of 2017. UNICEF agreed to coordinate the documentation of good and promising practices from Romania in social areas, and to use RoAID funding mechanisms to support horizontal cooperation. A UNICEF staff member was posted to support RoAID, laying a solid foundation for children to be centrally placed in Romania’s overseas development.

Several other horizontal cooperation activities were supported by UNICEF Romania, such as on out-of-school children with Iran and on inclusive education with Portugal.

The UNICEF Executive Board approved the new Country Programme for Romania (2018-2022), and UNICEF Romania successfully developed and implemented the new management plan for the new country programme. The funding outlook from international and domestic sources remained positive, and overall progress and office assurance indicators reflected the office’s strong and effective systems.

Humanitarian assistance

Romania did not experience a humanitarian crisis in 2017.

In the context of the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe, the number of new asylum applications reached 4,670 in 2017, 892 of whom were rejected. Six irregular maritime movements (548 people, one-third of who were children) arrived via the Black Sea between August and November 2017. However, fears of a new route being opened were unfounded as of the end of 2017. UNICEF and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) jointly conducted a number of monitoring missions to several custody centres. Issues around access to education and child detention (along with parents) were recorded, and follow-up meetings took place with the relevant authorities (The National Child Rights Authority and the Ministry of Internal Affairs). The situation of the children in the centres is improving, but legislation related to national security that is placing families with children under detention is still enforced.

UNICEF continued to monitor the situation very closely, in consultation with UNHCR, the Government of Romania and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Equity in practice

While national measures in health, education and child protection are above international averages, data shows that disparities are increasing. The lack of data disaggregation by age,
ethnicity, sex, (dis)ability or socio-economic background makes the identification of vulnerable children difficult, however, all studies (including UNICEF’s) indicate that the most vulnerable children are found among rural communities, Roma or poor families, or have disabilities.

The availability and use of disaggregated data constitutes an essential step towards equity. Therefore UNICEF Romania contributed to strengthening the child rights monitoring system at all levels in order to: increase demand and supply of disaggregated data for policy development; build the capacity of the Government of Romania and independent institutions (such as the Ombudsman Institution and civil society organizations) to generate and use data for advocacy; and strengthen the provision of community-based services for vulnerable children and their families through the development of a real-time monitoring and case management tool.

In addition to being poorly funded, social sectors do not allocate their financial resources in an equitable manner. The education sector prioritizes tertiary education, with limited investment in quality, inclusive preschool, primary or secondary education. Both the health and the child protection sectors focus their financial resources on specialized services (e.g. hospitals and care for children separated from their families) and have developed very few preventive, community-based services. Over two-thirds of the social protection budget is allocated to cash benefits, leaving few resources for services. Services and cash benefits are not conceived or implemented as a comprehensive package that would lift families out of poverty and social exclusion.

The overall focus of the Romania-UNICEF Country Programme 2013-2017 is on vulnerable children living in marginalized communities with large minorities and in the most vulnerable and deprived areas where poverty is pervasive, school attendance is precarious, and families are at a higher social risk. Partnerships with national stakeholders concentrate on disparity reduction, equity and social inclusion of vulnerable children. An equity lens is therefore applied to all programme components and strategies.

Two modelling programmes are at the centre of the UNICEF Romania Country Programme, namely one focusing on implementing a minimum package of services, including quality inclusive education, and the other on integrated services for adolescents at the local level. Both models generated evidence to support UNICEF’s provision of technical expertise, which, combined with advocacy and broad partnerships, succeeded in ensuring that vulnerable children are included in all relevant strategies and that equity is better reflected in these new normative documents.

These models tested and confirmed that there are strategies and activities that can lead to results for the most disadvantaged children. Some results in the areas targeted by the models included: all children at risk of separation still live with their families and receive community services; 93 per cent of children without identity document received birth certificates; 97 per cent of children not registered in the health insurance system are now covered and access health care; and involved schools reduced absenteeism, with some even fully eliminating dropout within a year.

Knowledge generation also systematically included an equity focus. Studies and publication during the period of the current country programme document (CPD) included topics such as out-of-school children; impact of the per capita formula on disadvantaged schools; making a financial case to increase the education budget to increase access of vulnerable children; a knowledge, attitudes and practice study on parenting in vulnerable families; a publication on children with disabilities; a joint study with the World Bank on the situation of children in public
care; and a study on the situation and risk behaviours of adolescents, among others. This research influenced the development of national strategies and the revision of methodologies for increasing equity and social inclusion.

Lastly, the focus on equity was reflected in UNICEF’s external communication efforts. These included: a social change campaign on children as victims of violence; advocacy on de-institutionalization of children under the age of three and inclusive education for children with disabilities and children belonging to the Roma ethnic minority; and a multi-year campaign to prevent and reduce violence. With these efforts, UNICEF continued to represent the voice of “invisible” children in Romania together with numerous partners from civil society and in close collaboration with traditional and online media.

 Strategic Plan 2018-2021

The new Romania Country Programme for 2018-2022 will contribute to the promotion and implementation of several SDGs, both in and outside Romania: end poverty (Goal 1), good health and well-being (Goal 3), quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16) and partnership for sustainable development (Goal 17). Expected results will also contribute to the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, in particular the goal areas that every child survives and thrives, every child learns, every child is protected from violence and exploitation, and every child has an equitable chance in life. All key issues and priorities for advancing child rights identified in this programme of cooperation are included in the 2014-2020 National Strategies, ensuring strategic alignment with national priorities and budgets.

The strategy proposed for the implementation of the new country programme and for contributing to the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan includes a number of activities described below.

Evidence will be generated by developing and implementing models at the local and county levels to show how Romania could provide quality, universal, community-based child and family-centred services, focusing on the most vulnerable. This operational research will be complemented by cutting-edge studies focusing on violence, gender disparities, Roma children, childcare system reform, quality inclusive education, neonatal care, data collection systems and public financing for children.

Policy advice will be provided to national counterparts to align national legislation with international and EU standards (including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and to support the translation of models supported by UNICEF into national policies, norms, standards, tools, methodologies, training and budget allocations (national and external).

Strategic partnerships will be further developed as follows: with the Government for the development of the normative framework, secondary legislation and budget; with Parliament to strengthen legislation and improve public financing for children; with associations of local and county authorities for the replication of models supported by UNICEF and leveraging state and EU funding; with civil society to identify expertise, jointly advocate on child rights, and provide space for children and adolescents to engage in civic life; with the corporate sector to mobilize resources and political will for child rights; with the media to report on child rights violations, amplify the voice of UNICEF, put children on the public and political agenda and initiate social
engagement on selected issues around the country programme priorities; and with children and adolescents themselves to create space for their voices to be heard.

Public and private advocacy with decision makers and influencers will be strengthened around the adoption of policies and budgets for the scale-up of models supported by UNICEF, as well as key issues such as de-institutionalization, prevention and reduction of violence against children, quality inclusive education, reduction of neonatal mortality and prevention of teenage pregnancy.

Communication for social change will be further developed at the national level and in the models focusing on gender-based discrimination, discrimination against Roma and children with disabilities, and tolerance towards violence against children.

Horizontal cooperation will be promoted systematically by identifying and documenting good practices and expertise from Romania on child rights, especially on provision of community-based, cross-sectoral services for vulnerable children and their families; childcare system reforms; and quality inclusive education. UNICEF Romania will work with the UNICEF Regional Office and NY Headquarters on the validation and matchmaking for these good practices and collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the development of a child rights component in Romania’s Official Development Assistance.

Country programme indicators and monitoring and evaluation plans will be integrated in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the national strategies, particularly the national child rights strategy, as well as counterparts’ annual reports. One key opportunity is the increasing interest of Romania to report on SDGs. UNICEF Romania is positioned as a key partner in supporting the country to coordinate its SDG implementation plans with the National Sustainable Development Strategy that will cover 2019-2030.

Emerging areas of importance

Refugee and migrant children. In consultation with the UNHCR, the Government of Romania and relevant NGOs, UNICEF Romania continued to closely monitor the situation of refugee and migrant children. In 2017, an increased influx of asylum seekers was registered and six irregular maritime movements (548 people, one-third of who were children) arrived via the Black Sea. UNICEF Romania joined UNHCR and conducted monitoring missions in the custody centres following information about children being in a detention regime with their parents. The information proved to be true. A joint request for action was filed to the Child Rights Authority, and a joint visit with the representatives of the authority was subsequently organized. The situation of the children in those centres is improving but legislation that is placing adults under a detention regime is still enforced.

Greater focus on the second decade of life. In 2017, a UNICEF Romania model on adolescents implemented in three urban areas entered its final year, and a plan to transfer the centres to the municipalities was implemented. These centres provide information to and organize activities for adolescents, including vulnerable ones. Over 25,000 adolescents participated in activities to help them develop their knowledge and competencies to prevent substance abuse, promote education, and support positive relationships with families and communities. The team of experts involved in this model finalized the first draft report on the use of non-cognitive skills by school counsellors in the Romanian education system. Based on the results of the analysis, a draft of the toolkit for training school counsellors was developed.
UNICEF Romania also engaged in a regional study on parenting for adolescents. The study will provide evidence on the parenting experiences of parents of adolescents, including vulnerable ones. Based on the recommendations of the study, UNICEF will develop policy papers on parenting for adolescents. UNICEF and its partner, the National Student Council, initiated a needs assessment to identify key elements for supporting greater children’s and adolescents’ participation.

UNICEF continued its campaign to decrease risky behaviours among adolescents. Over 3,300 adolescents from urban (Cluj-Napoca and Bacau) and rural (Bacau County) communities were actively involved in activities meant to build resistance to peer pressure and to inform them about the effects of alcohol consumption. In addition, UNICEF increased the capacity of 175 social workers, community nurses and school counsellors from 45 communities in Bacau County to work with adolescents on preventing risky behaviours.

**Accelerate integrated early childhood development (ECD).** Following the analysis of the implementation of the early education strategy, and based on the policy recommendations formulated in that study and other research reports, UNICEF and its partners embarked on the revision of the strategy, capitalizing on recent advocacy efforts that have generated an increased political focus on early education (ante-preschool and preschool education). UNICEF was also a member of the working group on early education within the Educated Romania Initiative (under the Presidential Administration). The revisions of the strategy will also capitalize on the achievements and lessons learned from UNICEF Romania projects targeting the promotion of quality, equitable and inclusive early education as well as on the cross-sectoral, integrated approaches tested.

UNICEF and its partners continued the testing of a model of coordinated social, health and education services to increase the capacity of community nurses and social workers to identify, prevent and address issues related to access for services for young children and violence against children. The objectives are to increase the access of these children to health, education and child protection services, and to improve the knowledge and practices of parents. Following community workers’ interventions, 93 per cent of children identified without an identity document received birth certificates. Some 97 per cent of children not registered in the health insurance system are now covered and access health care. All children identified at risk of separation are still living with their families with support from community services. The quality of services was also considerably strengthened through dedicated and trained social workers, community nurses, school counsellors, and health and school mediators.

### Summary notes and acronyms

- **CMT** country management team
- **CPMP** country programme management plan
- **CPD** country programme document
- **DCT** direct cash transfer
- **ESL** early school leaving
- **EU** European Union
- **GSSC** Global Shared Service Centre
- **HACT** harmonized approach to cash transfers
- **MoE** Ministry of Education
- **MPS** minimum package of services
- **NGO** non-governmental organization
- **OECD** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Capacity building was one of the key strategies used by UNICEF Romania throughout the period of the 2013-2017 CPD.

The quality inclusive education (QIE) model produced capacity-building modules and curriculums for improving the school management capacity to prevent and reduce school dropout and absenteeism, track students at risk and improve teaching methods. These will be transferred to the national level through EU projects approved in 2017 targeting virtually all teachers. UNICEF Romania also strengthened a partnership among the top five national universities that will bring a change in the pre-service training for new teachers. Through the QIE model, UNICEF also contributed to capacity building at the central level (MoE and its agencies) and county level for evidence-based policy formulation and implementation on assessment and evaluation, school desegregation and education inclusion and equity.

Technical assistance was provided to ensure that local authorities were aware of the guidelines to apply for the funding that would lead to closing 50 large institutions hosting over 2,000 children. In addition, a communication component was developed jointly involving one of the local UNICEF Ambassadors. After the new legislative package on evaluation and referral mechanisms for children with disabilities was approved, UNICEF Romania supported capacity building for some 1,000 professionals who are members of evaluation committees throughout the country. Approximately 70,000 children with disabilities will have quality evaluation services that will allow them to access the most appropriate services and cash benefits according to their needs.

Capacity building related to the minimum package of services (MPS) model was systematized and gathered in a single package and accredited with national continuum professional training authorities. It will be available for use in any other county replicating the MPS in the future. The package has curriculums for ten days of integrated training for all members of the community team.

Evidence generated, policy dialogue and advocacy

Evidence generated at local and national levels was used with the new government following the 2016 elections to advocate for increasing the resources allocated for children and to replicate models developed by UNICEF throughout the country programme.

Intense advocacy positioned UNICEF Romania as an advisor of choice about children’s issues for the Prime Minister who was installed at the end June 2017. A regular mechanism of meetings and feedback was established with the Prime Minister’s Office.

Efforts in 2014-2016 to promote the integrated approach at the community level for services for children and families, based on evidence generated by UNICEF models, resulted in the adoption of a concept for scaling up these services in the new government programme. A new government order was issued to regulate the provision of such services at the community level.
A joint UNICEF-OECD study on assessment and evaluation for enhanced learning outcomes was used to successfully advocate with the MoE to implement the recommendations becoming a critical element of the new education reform. In addition, the evidence generated at the local level in the implementation of the QIE model that UNICEF is testing in 45 communities was used for the development of new proposals for the use of US$123 million in EU funding to improve quality in education. This will include the training of 55,000 teachers in using modern teaching techniques that were promoted with the UNICEF model.

Key recommendations based on evidence produced by UNICEF were incorporated in the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s concluding observations for 2017. The National Committee of the Child Rights Authority agreed with the UNICEF recommendation to have annual progress reports prepared to follow the implementation of the measures recommended in the concluding observations.

**Partnerships**

In order to advance children’s rights at the national and international level and to support horizontal cooperation, UNICEF strengthened its partnerships with the Prime Minister’s Office, line ministries and National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption. At the same time, UNICEF Romania began to prepare the ground for Romania’s Presidency of the EU, at which time children and adolescents could be one of the priorities advanced by the country.

UNICEF Romania contributed to the discussions around the preparation of the new Country Specific Recommendations that the European Commission issues every year for member countries.

A new dimension of the partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office was initiated through the Department of Sustainable Development. The work aims to support the process of nationalizing the SGD targets for Romania through the new Sustainable Development Strategy that will cover 2018-2030.

New partnerships were initiated with some non-traditional government partners. For example, work with the Ministry of Communication promoted the use at the national level of the real-time monitoring and case management web-based instrument that UNICEF developed as part of the modelling of the MPS.

Horia Tecau, international tennis champion, joined the UNICEF team as the new National Ambassador, to support the organization’s efforts to draw attention to children’s issues.

UNICEF and The Romanian Football Federation began working together in an innovative partnership to promote quality inclusive education and to end violence against children.

Well known international sport champions, TV and radio anchors, UNICEF National Ambassadors, and central and local authorities responded to UNICEF’s challenge to create opportunities for children to express their views during the week dedicated to World Children’s Day.

Ethical child-friendly reporting, in both traditional and new media, was promoted to communications specialists and journalists in partnership with universities and different media institutions.
External communication and public advocacy

Despite several changes in the government, UNICEF managed to maintain children at the top of the public and political agenda, following advocacy efforts, high-level public events, field trips and awareness-raising and fund-raising campaigns. Partnerships were strengthened with key decision makers from central and local authorities, Parliament and the media to promote children’s rights.

Throughout the year, and especially during the week dedicated to World Children’s Day, children had the opportunity to share their views and takeover important roles. On November 20, the Romanian Prime Minister, the President, line ministers, international sports champions, well-known TV anchors and journalists, local authorities and teachers partnered with UNICEF to provide an opportunity for children’s voices to be heard. An innovative multimedia exhibition presented UNICEF’s work in Romania to a new audience.

UNICEF supported Romania to strengthen its role as a champion for children and become a pathfinder country by joining the Global Partnership against Violence against Children. In addition, UNICEF facilitated the sharing of Romania’s best practices on education and adolescents at the international level.

UNICEF generated nine per cent of children-related news, a significant increase compared to four per cent in 2016, and almost doubled the number of news items related to its initiatives. The number of UNICEF Facebook in Romania reached 178,000 fans, and 39 million people. Field trips with National Ambassadors were used to explain UNICEF’s upstream work.

Campaigns addressing violence in society and discrimination and a fund-raising campaign using an SMS pledge reached approximately 270 million potential impressions through 1,904 pro-bono broadcast spots. The events generated an additional 291 reports in the media, reaching more than 105 million potential impressions.

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

As part of the process of preparing the implementation of the new CPD 2018-2022, UNICEF Romania reached out to RoAID and agreed to coordinate the documentation of good and promising practices from Romania in social areas in a systematic way and to use RoAID funding mechanisms to support horizontal cooperation.

Romania was recognized as a country with good results in implementing a UNICEF/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics Global Initiative on Out-of-School-Children and was invited to share its experience with Iran, which recently joined this initiative. UNICEF Romania in partnership with UNICEF Iran facilitated the participation and sharing of experience of a representative from the Romanian MoE at a regional meeting on out-of-school children organized in Iran.

As part of the partnership with OECD on an education assessment study, UNICEF Romania jointly with the UNICEF Regional Office organized a regional conference attended by four countries – Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia – to share experiences of the development of the study and its recommendations and to promote similar activities within each country.

In its efforts to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in education, to reduce early
school leaving (ESL) and increase the quality of education, UNICEF Romania organized a high-level study visit to Portugal, a country that has made significant progress in these areas, to inform future national reforms.

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

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**Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages**

For four years, UNICEF Romania explicitly and intensively focused on integrated programming, advocacy and communication, particularly around the development and provision of a cross-sectoral, community-based package of services, and combating violence against children.

The first challenge was to break down barriers within the office and establish internal coordination mechanisms and ownership. Developing an integrated approach and vision across sectors at the national and sub-national levels was required to connect these initiatives with sectoral objectives and EU policies. The development of several national strategies (especially the strategies on child rights, on parenting education, on early education and on social inclusion and the school segregation monitoring frameworks), and their associated budgets, provided the opportunity to introduce “cross-sectorality” into the national policy framework. A strong partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, and particularly the National Authority for Child Rights and with the MoE and its central agencies, proved to be essential.

UNICEF Romania contributed to the development and functioning of the National Child Rights Council, a coordination structure that brings together all relevant ministries, academia and NGOs (including children). At the sub-national level, UNICEF Romania supported the translation of the national strategy on social inclusion into a county-level strategy, with a coordination mechanism.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**
A human rights-based approach was maintained in the UNICEF Romania Country Programme, from knowledge generation and technical assistance to advocacy and partnerships. As much as possible, data used was disaggregated by sex, geographic origin and area of residence, age, (dis)ability and ethnicity, in order to expose disparities hidden behind averages.

UNICEF’s technical assistance and advocacy also focused on the implementation of the National Strategy on Child Rights, the Strategy for the Reduction of Early School Leasing, the Strategy on Early Education, the Action Plan for School Desegregation and Increased Quality in Pre-university Education, Social Inclusion, Health, the Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the National Roma Inclusion Strategy (that frame the allocation of EU and national funding until 2020). These strategies are in line with the international human rights conventions ratified by Romania. Key targets for children are monitored through the monitoring and evaluation plans and frameworks of the strategies (developed with UNICEF support and contribution), and budget allocation will be tracked against budgeted implementation plans also developed with UNICEF Romania support. The processes to develop the strategies and monitor them included wide consultations, with children included as part of such consultations via their representative organizations such as the National Council for Child Rights and the National Students Council. Also included were representatives of the relevant ministries, civil society, academia, parents and UNICEF.

UNICEF Romania has a partnership agreement with the National Students Council. A proposal was made by UNICEF Romania, which the National Council on Child Rights supported, to produce an annual report of the progress in implementing the latest Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations. The report was issued in mid-2017.

UNICEF Romania continued its advocacy for the establishment of an independent child rights monitoring mechanism. The proposal for the establishment of a dedicated deputy of the Ombudsman to deal exclusively with children’s issues is considered a key opportunity to continue supporting the capacity development of the institution.

**Gender equality**

All the models of innovative, cross-sectoral services supported by UNICEF Romania incorporate a gender analysis and responsiveness component. The gender dimension was actively mainstreamed in the model testing cross-sectoral community-based services (MPS and QIE). The capacity of local professionals to recognize and address multiple discriminations, including gender discrimination, was increased. Methodologies and support tools used by local professionals were reviewed and are gender responsive. Gender-based violence is addressed at the local level through specific activities in communities where violence was identified as a key rights violation.

The model developed the network of community nurses who, through outreach, facilitate the access of children and pregnant women to information and health care. The model is also testing a parenting education intervention while promoting a co-parenting philosophy aimed at strengthening fathers’ engagement in childcare. To support the education of children at risk of dropout, a pilot project on education supported by UNICEF promoted successful role models, including women and men who challenge the traditional gender role division. Moreover, gender mainstreaming is built into the National Parenting Education Strategy and the Early Education Strategy developed and revised with UNICEF technical assistance. The gender dimension was consolidated in the evaluation of school access and participation at the national level (e.g. the study on school dropout by cohort launched in 2017).
**Environmental sustainability**

In Romania, the UNICEF office follows the national guidelines and strategies to incorporate an environmental sustainability component into the way its programmes are planned and delivered. These strategies and principles are in line with EU recommendations and are reflected in the policy development process rules, as well as in the horizontal principles in planning and programming the national and EU budgets. National principles and guidelines are satisfactorily covering the requirements that UNICEF Romania would otherwise have limited capacity and resources to promote.

UNICEF Romania continued to monitor and report on its environmental footprint, and took steps to reduce it by installing motion sensors in common spaces, procuring low energy office equipment, and signing a contract with a company for the recycling of paper, plastic, glass, toners, batteries and old equipment. As the United Nations (UN) House administrator, UNICEF successfully promoted these measures with other agencies collocated in the UN House.

**Effective leadership**

The UNICEF Romania governance system, including statutory committees, continued to function well, ensuring sharing of information, wide internal consultations and transparency, and informed and timely decisions. The country management team (CMT) met once a month to review key information and performance indicators and advise the Representative on decisions. Adequate support and induction for the new Representative was provided to ensure a quick integration with the team and an orientation to the country context and key partners. All key performance indicators are on track. The 2017 Rolling Management Plan was developed with staff inputs. It described key programme and management priorities, staff responsibilities and accountabilities.

UNICEF Romania adopted a consultative and participatory process for the preparation of the country programme document (CPD) and the country programme management plan (CPMP). A task force comprised of management and staff representatives was established to oversee the plan’s preparation and ensure that the process was effective, efficient and participatory. A workshop facilitated by the UNICEF Regional Office was organized with all staff to review and validate the capacities and changes needed. Both the country programme document and the country programme management plan were approved.

The UNICEF Regional Director visited Romania in May and met with high-level officials, reviewed the progress made with the integrated community intervention model and interacted with partners at the local level, as well as with children and families. As a follow-up to the visit, office staff and national partners presented the model and the cross-sectoral approach to Regional Office specialists.

The mid-year review was used as a strategic moment of reflection to assess progress towards objectives in the final year of the current country programme and replication and sustainability of the model that was piloted in Bacau county. The business continuity plan, early warning and early action platform and UN Security Plan for Romania were updated to reflect changes in staff and circumstances.
Financial resources management

Key performance indicators and the global scorecard were monitored on a monthly basis by the country management team, including budget implementation rates, the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) and outstanding direct cash transfers (DCT). The expenditure rates of Regular Resources and Other Resources reached 100 percent at the end of 2017. Grants expiring in 2017 were fully utilized within their validity date. All transactions were processed in a timely and efficient manner. UNICEF Romania is fully implementing the new partnership cooperation agreement and HACT policies.

In 2017, five micro-assessment and three audits were completed. UNICEF Romania conducted 12 spotchecks and 53 programmatic visits and provided training for partners’ staff on how to manage and report on UNICEF funds. The HACT assurance plan was fully completed. On the basis of risk management, activities under DCT were monitored and partners were supported, from both a programmatic and financial perspective to ensure timely and quality implementation and reporting. By the end of the year, all DCTs were liquidated in less than nine months.

Fundraising and donor relations

UNICEF continued to successfully raise funds for its programmes and beyond from both international and local sources. At the end of 2017 all funding for 2018 – year one of the new CPD – was ensured. Concept notes and donor proposals were sent to donors, covering almost 85 per cent of the planned other resources for 2019-2022.

The majority of the funding for the new CPD is expected from existing donors, including the European Economic Area/Norway Grants and the Fondation Botnar through the UNICEF Swiss National Committee. Following funding covering 2014-2017, Norway decided to continue funding UNICEF for 2018-2022 and agreed in principle with the concept note shared for continued support. UNICEF also signed a three-year funding agreement with the National Agency for European Community Programmes in Education and Training of the MoE for using funds the agency receives from the EU. Lastly, new partnerships are being prepared with Italian and Norwegian National Committees.

Local fund-raising mobilized US$870,000, with 75 per cent coming from monthly donations. More than 4,000 direct debit contracts were signed, with a total gross income of US$76,000. A total of 13,471 SMS donor pledges were made following two direct response TV campaigns run between August and November in partnership with Romania’s two main TV news channels.

One of the campaigns, “Together, a team for children!”, is part of the three-year fund-raising and awareness-raising partnership that UNICEF signed with the Romanian Football Federation in early 2017. The campaign targets football fans, and one TV spot features a well-known football player. The campaigns also tested an integrated approach: TV, digital and offline, and broadcasting the TV spot at stadiums during matches of the Romanian national football team.

Evaluation and research

One of the core roles of UNICEF Romania, an upper-middle-income country, is to generate relevant and complex knowledge about children by testing innovations through local models. Ensuring that these models are independently evaluated and that high-quality evaluations are shared with partners are key to influencing policy development.

UNICEF fully observes the UNICEF Evaluation Policy and the updated the United Nations
Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation. UNICEF Romania used external feedback mechanisms and received positive feedback on its terms of reference for evaluations and inception reports. The summative evaluation of two modelling projects, the “School Attendance Initiative” (targeting causes of education dropout through interventions at different levels) and “First Priority: No More Invisible Children” (modelling of a minimum package of services to prevent separation of children from their families), were almost complete at the end of 2017. The draft reports were discussed with partners and will be used to inform future models on MPS and QIE. Final translated reports will be submitted to the quality assurance mechanism for review by the end of March 2018.

The report of the formative evaluation of the “Opportunities for Adolescents” modelling project that tests integrated services for adolescents in urban areas was drafted and will be finalized by mid-2018.

The challenge of a limited evaluation culture at the national level influenced the entire approach to policy reforms. Often policies are deemed to be not working or ineffective without the time and resources necessary for implementation and evaluation. As well, policies and interventions not properly evaluated may be declared and considered good practices. In an effort to build the involvement of the country in horizontal cooperation exchanges, UNICEF Romania developed documentation methods to validate national practices, and invested in the development of national evaluation capacities.

### Efficiency gains and cost savings

UNICEF Romania continued to reduce costs in 2017. Long-term agreements for printing and office supply services were signed (and are being used by other UN agencies), and contracts for utilities services were re-negotiated, generating gains in terms of financial resources and quality of services. UNICEF continued to efficiently administer the UN House, handling contracts and payments with all utilities and communication suppliers, and calculating costs and shares for each co-locating agency. UNICEF re-negotiated the common agreements for recycling and telephony, resulting in better services for the agencies located in the UN House. Following UNICEF negotiations with the Government, the UN House building was fully refurbished in 2017 at no cost to UN agencies.

The corporate procurement card continued to be used, efficiently reducing time spent on transactions by staff in UNICEF Romania and the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC). The table of authority was revised to reflect the transfer of some processes to the GSSC and to streamline and increase transaction efficiency while respecting appropriate segregation of tasks. In line with the greening exercise led by UNICEF NY Headquarters, UNICEF Romania analysed data and initiated measures to reduce its environmental footprint such as collecting used paper and publications, recycling toners and obsolete equipment, and replacing regular fluorescent lights with LED lights to reduce energy consumption.

The country management team further implemented measures to streamline office management by reducing the number of office committees (the corporate learning and development committee and greening committee were incorporated into the CMT) and making use of corporate procurement cards. The automated banking system was used for all transactions, and decreased the time spent on payments and bank reconciliation.
Supply management

In line with the core roles of UNICEF Romania, supplies continued to constitute a very small portion of expenditures. The procurement of goods and services is centralized in the operations section, ensuring a better accuracy of data and time efficiency. Most procurement of programme and office supplies and services continued to be undertaken locally, including printed materials, furniture, information technology (IT) and communication equipment, as well as programme supplies for activities. Nine contracts over US$50,000 were successfully reviewed by the contracts review committee during the year.

Of a total of US$1,029,913 spent on goods and services, only US$190,660 was for programme supplies, primarily education supplies for kindergartens and new upgraded tablets for real-time monitoring and case management for the UNICEF-supported pilot project on integrated social services, Aurora. UNICEF programme staff monitored the distribution and use of supplies by end users through regular field visits. UNICEF Romania does not have a warehouse and does not keep inventory in stock.

UNICEF is progressively increasing the use of long-term agreements to decrease the cost of services. Long-term agreements were signed in 2017 for printing and office supplies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>190,660</td>
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<td>221,256</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>808,657</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>190,660</td>
<td>839,253</td>
<td>1,029,913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: UNICEF Romania does not support construction services and does not have warehouses.

Security for staff and premises

UNICEF Romania is part of the Security Management Team and fully implements its decisions for staff and premises. The UN Security Plan and the Residential Security Measures for Romania were updated and approved by the UN Department of Safety and Security. The Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) self-assessment exercise was conducted. Security and safety risks are considered to be very low in Romania. VHF radios and satellite phones were tested quarterly by members of the business continuity plan core team. The subscription for the satellite phone was updated. The business continuity plan was updated in August 2017, and the disaster recovery plan was updated in February 2017 to reflect changes after the transition of some processes and responsibilities to the GSSC and Light Office.

All users have remote access to organizational IT applications and systems. A technical support mission was conducted by the UNICEF Regional Office to support UNICEF Romania’s emergency management team in the implementation of the preparedness standards. The early warning early action platform was updated. Different components of the business continuity plan and security plan were tested in 2017 (phone tree, VHF communication, satellite phone, remote working, fire drill, evacuation drill). All UNICEF staff in Romania undertook first-aid training and are better prepared to react in case of an accident.

Human resources

The office staffing and structure were assessed as part of the preparation for the new CPMP 2018-2022, and a revised organogram was approved by the regional PBR. Further to the global integrated budget 2018-2021 decisions, two posts became vacant and three new posts were
created. Following the approval of the new country programme, two additional posts were abolished and five new posts were created. Staff in abolished posts were informed in due time and support was provided by management, the local staff association and the UNICEF Regional Office human resources team. All new and upgraded posts were advertised, and recruitment was being finalized at the end of the year with support from the UNICEF Regional Office.

The results of the 2017 Global Staff Survey were discussed by the local joint consultative committee and the country management team, and with all staff. Compared to the 2014 survey, the office improved significantly on work-life balance, job satisfaction and personal empowerment. These were addressed through a series of initiatives, including a staff retreat, promotion of flexible working arrangements and coaching sessions. The main issues from the 2017 survey remain career and professional development, and internal communication.

The learning and development committee identified the following corporate priorities based on a capacity gap analysis: public financing for children, coaching, how to lead a task team, time and stress management, and first aid and emergency preparedness. All new and upgraded posts were advertised, and recruitment was being finalized at the end of the year with support from the UNICEF Regional Office.

Five all-staff meetings were organized to share information on the development of the CPD and CPMP and discuss results of local staff morale surveys. The local joint consultative committee, consisting of senior management and the local staff association, met four times to address issues identified in the Global Staff Survey and discuss matters related to implementation of the CPMP. An exercise was conducted with all staff to identify specific risks to the achievement of programme results and management objectives.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

The information communication technology (ICT) function supported the mandate of UNICEF Romania by providing appropriate ICT solutions and expertise on time. Systems availability targets were met, as were disaster recovery and business continuity requirements. Outdated hardware was replaced on time with low consumption notebooks, and functional equipment being disposed of was donated to implementing partners or offices in the region who needed it, as per the Property Survey Board recommendation. Used supplies and defective hardware were recycled or disposed of in a secure, environmentally friendly and safe manner. Hardware and software were upgraded and optimized for local users. Windows 10 was installed and optimized on 90 per cent of laptops. The internet speed was increased by negotiating better services with the internet service provider. A back-up line for the internet was set up to ensure business continuity.

The subscription for the satellite phone was updated and the sat-phone was tested quarterly. The business continuity plan was updated in August 2017, and the disaster recovery plan was updated in February 2017, mainly to reflect the transition to the Light Office. All users have remote access to organizational IT applications and systems.

Technical support to programme and fund-raising included procurement of upgraded tablets for real-time monitoring and case management for the UNICEF-supported pilot project on integrated social services – Aurora – as well as maintenance and in-house repair of defective equipment.
Programme components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support to programme delivery

Analytical statement of progress
Governance systems continued to function well, ensuring transparency, the appropriate sharing of information, and wide consultations within the office, as well as informed and timely decisions. The structure of the statutory committees and the table of authorities were reviewed and updated to reflect changes resulting from the transfer of some financial and human resources processes to the GSSC. To further increase efficiency, the number of statutory committees was reduced to the minimum required. All statutory committees operated smoothly and in a timely manner.

Follow-up to the Global Staff Survey was a priority for management and the local staff association, who jointly identified, implemented and monitored several initiatives in response to the survey findings. The Annual Management Plan for 2017 was developed in consultation with staff and describes key programme and management priorities, and staff responsibilities and accountabilities. Key performance indicators from the global scorecard were monitored during the monthly CMT meetings, and were on track. A risk assessment exercise was conducted with all staff to identify specific risks to the achievement of programme and management objectives.

UNICEF occupies Government-provided, rent-free premises, shared with other UN agencies, and continued to efficiently administer UN House. Following negotiation with the Government, the UN House building was fully refurbished in 2016-2017 at no cost to the UN agencies. At the end of 2017, UNICEF successfully renegotiated the space allocation between agencies in UN House.

UNICEF Romania explored further opportunities to increase efficiency. Long-term agreements for printing and office supplies were signed, and contracts for recycling and telephony were renegotiated, generating gains in terms of financial resources and quality of services. The corporate procurement card continued to be used by the office, and the new automated banking system was used for all transactions, reducing the time spent on payments and bank reconciliation by staff at UNICEF Romania and the GSSC.

Following the greening exercise led by UNICEF NY Headquarters, UNICEF Romania analysed the collected data and initiated measures to reduce its environmental footprint. An energy audit was conducted in 2017, and recommendations were considered for phased implementation in later years. UNICEF took the lead as the UN House administrator to install LED lights and sensors in common areas and to recycle toners, used paper, plastic and glass.

UNICEF Romania is fully implementing the new partnership cooperation agreement and HACT policies (UNICEF is the only UN agency to implement HACT). The implementation of the HACT plan is monitored as part of programme management mechanisms, CMT meetings and the Annual Management Review. One hundred per cent of HACT assurance activities were completed. There were no DCTs over nine months.

UNICEF Romania actively contributed to the global electronic HACT (e-ZHACT) and budget management tool development.
OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient governance structures and systems to adequately manage risks and achieve programme results

Analytical statement of progress
The country management team met once a month to review strategic information and indicators and advise the Representative on key decisions. All staff were given the opportunity to provide inputs into the agenda of the team’s meetings. Five all-staff meetings were organized to share and discuss local, regional and global updates. The local joint consultative committee met four times, focusing on issues identified in the staff morale survey and staff retreat. Internal communication improved through weekly section meetings.

The structure of the statutory committees and the table of authorities were updated to reflect changes in staff. The office workflows for allocation of locally raised funds were reviewed. The learning and development committee and the greening committee were incorporated into the country management team to further streamline office management, in line with the NY Headquarters initiative on the simplification of committees. An emergency preparedness and response training activity was organized for all staff with support from the UNICEF Regional Office. The business continuity plan and disaster recovery plan were reviewed and revised to reflect changes with regard to the transition of some processes and responsibilities to the GSSC and Light Office. The UN Security Plan for Romania was also updated and approved by the UN Department for Safety and Security. The Early Warning and Early Action platform was updated in May.

UNICEF Romania continued to improve its information communication technology system. A number of adjustments were performed to achieve the systems availability targets and meet disaster recovery and business continuity requirements. With procurement of laptops and implementation of the Light Office initiative, all staff are now able to work remotely. Windows 10 was installed on all laptops. A back-up ISP connection was purchased and tested to support business continuity.

OUTPUT 2 Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources and of other assets of the organization

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Romania successfully transferred its financial transactions to the GSSC. A pilot was successfully run of the electronic payment system through the Bank Communication Management module in SAP, in close collaboration with NY Headquarters and the GSSC. All payments are now made directly from SAP.

Long-term agreements were signed for printing and office supplies. UNICEF Romania held six contract review committee meetings and completed the selection and contracting of 67 consultants and contractors on time, and in a transparent and documented manner. The contract for recycling was re-negotiated and a new provider was selected, which resulted in improved service.

UNICEF Romania is fully implementing the new partnership cooperation agreement and HACT policies. The implementation of the HACT assurance plan is monitored by the CMT. One hundred per cent of HACT assurance activities were completed as per the HACT assurance
plan. There were no DCTs over nine months. Activities under DCT were closely monitored and partners were supported, from both a programmatic and financial perspective, to ensure timely and quality implementation and reporting.

UNICEF Romania occupies government-provided, rent-free premises shared with other UN agencies and the Council of Europe. UNICEF administers the premises and services and chairs the UN House Management Team, which consists of representatives from all agencies located there.

Key performance indicators were on track: no DCT over nine months; the budget expenditure rate at 100 per cent; all donor reports sent on time; 100 per cent of the HACT assurance plan completed; and recommendations from the 2013 audits implemented and monitored by the country management team throughout the year.

**OUTPUT 3** Effective and efficient management of human capacity, including staff development and learning

**Analytical statement of progress**

As in previous years, the Global Staff Survey results were discussed during meetings of the local joint consultative committee and country management team (which includes a representative of the local staff association) and with all staff. The main issues (job satisfaction and motivation, work-life balance and personal empowerment) were addressed through a series of initiatives, including a staff retreat, promotion of flexible working arrangements and coaching sessions.

All performance evaluation reports for 2016 were completed within the deadline. UNICEF Romania also completed the planning of all the 2017 Performance Evaluation Reports in ACHIEVE on time.

The office staffing and structure were assessed as part of the preparation for the new CPMP 2018-2022, and a revised organogram was approved by the regional PBR. Further to the global integrated budget 2018-2021 decisions, two posts became vacant and three new posts were created. Following the approval of the new country programme for Romania, two additional posts were abolished and five new posts were created. Staff in abolished posts were informed in due time and support was provided by management, the local staff association and the Regional Office human resources team. All new and upgraded posts were advertised, and recruitment was being finalized at the end of the year with support from the Regional Office.

The learning and training committee, integrated into the country management team, identified corporate priorities based on a capacity gap analysis of the office in terms of its priorities. These included public financial management, coaching, first aid and how to lead a task team. One hundred per cent of the corporate learning and development plan was completed, and feedback from staff showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of activities.

**OUTCOME 2** Reduce disparities, increase equity and promote the social inclusion of vulnerable boys and girls

**Analytical statement of progress**
The Government, UNICEF and partners renewed their commitment and made consolidated progress in the areas of child social inclusion and inequity reduction, a major priority for the Government programme for 2017-2020. Models of innovative and cross-sectoral services tested at the local level made a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable children and their families and will be considered for national scale-up.

The minimum package of services was implemented in 45 communities, reaching over 46,000 households, including 21,000 children, providing them with health, education, social and child protection services. Following community workers’ interventions, 93 per cent of children identified without identity documents received birth certificates. Some 97 per cent of children not registered in the health insurance system are now covered and access health care. All children identified at risk of separation remained with their families with support from community services. Of the households with children at risk of monetary poverty and not benefiting from family allowance, 30 per cent were assessed as being eligible for cash transfers, and the required documentation was prepared so they all received the relevant cash benefits.

The quality inclusive education (QIE) initiative was tested in 51 schools in the same communities as the MPS, reaching over 22,000 children, of whom 15 per cent were at risk of absenteeism/drop-out. As a result, schools reduced absenteeism, and some managed to eliminate dropout all together. By increasing the capacity of teachers, school management and parents through training and parental education, children received better quality and inclusive education, as well as a stronger support at home. UNICEF in partnership with the OECD and MoE finalized and launched the review of the assessment and evaluation system and provided technical assistance to translate the report’s recommendations into a national action plan, which will shape the country’s education sector reform.

In 2017, the UNICEF Romania model on adolescents implemented in three urban areas entered its final year of implementation, and the plan for transfer of the centres to the municipalities was implemented. These centres provide information to and activities for adolescents, including vulnerable ones. Over 25,000 adolescents participated in activities to help them develop their knowledge and competencies to prevent substance abuse, promote education, and support positive relationship with families and communities.

Based on the in-depth assessment of the childcare system conducted by the World Bank, the National Authority for Child Protection and UNICEF, a De-Institutionalization Master Plan was developed using US$3.7 million in EU funds. This plan helped leverage an initial tranche of US$61 million in EU funds to close 50 institutions and provide family-based solutions for nearly 2,000 children in institutions.

OUTPUT 1 Authorities at the national and subnational levels, communities and caregivers provide services and an environment conducive to the access of disadvantaged children, especially Roma, to quality, inclusive education

Analytical statement of progress
In line with the global UNICEF education agenda, the regional priority on the right to education and SDG 4 as well as other SDGs, UNICEF Romania promoted access to QIE for the most vulnerable children through the implementation of the QIE model at local and county levels, evidence generation, technical assistance to the Government, partnerships and advocacy. The model covers 51 schools reaching over 22,000 children, of whom 15 per cent are at risk of absenteeism/drop-out. As a result, schools reduced absenteeism, and some managed to
eliminate dropout. By increasing the capacity of teachers, school management and parents through training and parental education, children received better quality and more inclusive education, as well as a stronger support at home.

At the school level, the model improves the management and teaching capacity to support each child according to her or his needs and provides better teaching methods in line with the newly adopted competence-based curriculum. At the family level, the partnership between school and parents is strengthened, and parents receive parenting classes for enhanced skills. At the community level, local stakeholders are mobilized to support education through cross-sector cooperation and budget allocations. UNICEF Romania signed a strategic three-year partnership with the specialized MoE Agency, and received $370,000 in EU funds to further develop and scale-up the role model component.

UNICEF Romania continued its partnership with the MoE on school desegregation and provided technical assistance for the development of monitoring indicators for all criteria (ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status of families, residence area and school performance).

UNICEF Romania continued its innovative partnership with the OECD and the MoE on the review of the assessment and evaluation system. The review was finalized and launched in partnership with the Government, the OECD and the European Commission. UNICEF provided technical assistance to translate the report’s recommendations into a national action plan, which will inform the country’s education sector reform. As part of horizontal cooperation a regional technical workshop was organized to present the review and action plan in the Europe and Central Asia Region. As a result, the MoE, through its large project for teacher training on the new curriculum and the project for reform of secondary education, will use three key recommendations related to curriculum, examinations and teacher training on assessment methods. Recommendations of the report were included in the European Commission Education and Training Monitor Romania 2017. Representatives from Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia learned about the review methodology and showed interest in using it.

Romania was recognized as a country with good results in implementing a UNICEF/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)Institute of Statistics Global Initiative on Out-of-School-Children and was invited to share its experience with Iran, which recently joined this initiative. As part of horizontal cooperation and its efforts to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in education, UNICEF Romania organized a high-level study visit to Portugal, a country that has made significant progress in these areas, to inform future national reforms.

OUTPUT 2 Basic and specialized services are increasingly available to adolescent boys and girls, especially vulnerable ones, who are empowered to practise safer behaviours

**Analytical statement of progress**

In line with the regional priority on adolescents, UNICEF and its partners (Ministry of Youth, local authorities, civil society and adolescents) continued to promote the access of adolescents to friendly services through the implementation of the resource centre model. In 2017, the UNICEF Romania model on adolescents, implemented in three urban areas, entered its final year of implementation. The plan for transfer of the centres to the municipalities was implemented, and the centres are now municipally managed and funded. The formative evaluation of the model will be finalized in 2018.
In order to increase adolescents’ participation and empowerment, UNICEF in partnership with the National Students Council initiated a needs assessment exercise. The analysis covered the local, county and national level, and included interviews of representatives of the Council, national authorities, civil society and academia. The methodology and intermediary results were analysed with the Council. The intermediary results of the analysis were used to input into the revision of the National Action Plan 2018-2020 for the implementation of the National Strategy for Child Rights Protection. The analysis will be finalized in February 2018. Based on the recommendations, UNICEF and the Council will develop an action plan for capacity development of the Council.

UNICEF Romania provided technical support to a civil society organization for revision of the curriculums on parental education for adolescents. Consultations with representatives of civil society, community workers and academia supported the decision to infuse the non-cognitive skills approach in the development of the curriculums. Romania is also part of regional research on parenting for adolescents, and UNICEF Romania organized piloting of the testing tools and the training of research teams from six countries. The data collection process was completed at the end of 2017.

The partnership with academia continued in 2017. The second largest university in Romania initiated an analytical exercise on the use of non-cognitive skills in adolescence by school counsellors. The intermediary results, including responses from adolescents, fed into the piloting of a training activity for school counsellors. In order to identify best practices in the initial training of the counsellors, academics participated in an exchange of experience workshop with Spain’s University Autonoma. Based on recommendations of the analysis, the initial training of school counsellors and psychologists at the university level is being revised.

Together with civil society organizations and local partners, UNICEF implemented a communication campaign to decrease risky behaviours in adolescents. Community workers from 45 communes and three cities were trained on adolescents' participation.

As part of horizontal cooperation and efforts to increase engagement in the area of adolescents and youth development and share good practices on the development of integrated services for adolescents at the local level, UNICEF Romania organized a high-level workshop that brought together government officials, representatives from civil society organizations and adolescents from Romania and Moldova.

**OUTPUT 3** National integrated social protection system and other stakeholders provide effective quality continuum of services, and support protective norms and behaviours for children and families with special focus on protection from and prevention of any form of violence, especially child separation

**Analytical statement of progress**
In line with the regional priority on child right to a family environment and the SDG target on ending all forms of violence against children, UNICEF provided expertise and generated evidence through innovative models and studies to support the National Authority for Child Rights in reforming the Romanian childcare system.

Based on the in-depth assessment of the childcare system undertaken with the World Bank and the National Authority for Child Protection, a De-Institutionalization Master Plan was developed with technical support from UNICEF and the World Bank US$3.7 million in EU funds. This plan
helped leverage an initial tranche of $US61 million in EU funds to close 50 institutions and provide family-based solutions for nearly 2,000 children in institutions.

UNICEF also worked with the Ministries of Social Protection, Health and Education to develop cross-sectoral, community-based services to support children and families facing multiple vulnerabilities. The MPS, tested in one county, continues to increase the capacity of 45 communities to identify, address and monitor cases of children facing various risks, including social exclusion, violence, school dropout, family separation, and lack of access to health care. Integrated community teams of professionals provided child and family support services for some 4,000 children, modelling local-level interventions and case management for prevention of social exclusion. Aurora, the innovative tablet-based tool used by community professionals, also provides real-time monitoring data to decision makers.

Technical support was provided to the National Authority and stakeholder platform through initiatives related to the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. These included identification of the main actions and recommendations for policy change for the gradual implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and support for the participation of various civil society stakeholders.

After approving a new legislative package on evaluation and referral mechanisms for children with disabilities, developed by the Ministries of Social Protection, Health and Education, UNICEF supported capacity building for some 1,000 professionals from across the country. Transposing new regulations and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for children and youth, the effective application of the new legislative package ensures access for over 70,000 children with disabilities to quality evaluation services that will allow access to the most appropriate services and cash benefits, according to their needs.

OUTCOME 3 Public authorities, in partnership with civil society, international organizations and the private sector, will exercise good governance to reduce child deprivation and advance the rights of girls and boys, both nationally and sub-nationally

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF advocacy and positioning and the large partnerships built for children contributed to a clear agenda for children by the Government elected in December 2016.

The MPS for children and their families tested by UNICEF and its partners and the concept of QIE were among the key priorities of the new Government. The Ministries of Social Protection, Education and Health adopted a cross-ministerial order translating the key principles of the MPS into national policies and adopted the legislation requiring each community to have a social assistant. The EU allocated over $123 million to promote at the national level elements of the QIE package tested by UNICEF.

Continuing the partnership with civil society, UNICEF Romania also partnered with two major federations – the federation of NGOs active in child protection and the NGO coalition for education – to support their internal capacity building and their ability to bring evidence to raise the profile of their sectors on the public agenda.

A new dimension of the partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office was initiated through the
Department of Sustainable Development. The work aims to support the process of nationalizing the SDG targets for Romania through the new Sustainable Development Strategy that will cover 2018-2030. UNICEF Romania will contribute to the process especially for the indicators for which it is custodian, but also for overall process support given the small UN presence in the country.

Key recommendations based on evidence generated by UNICEF were incorporated in the Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations for 2017. The National Council of the Child Rights Authority agreed to the UNICEF recommendation to have annual progress reports prepared to follow the implementation of the measures recommended in the concluding observations.

Intense advocacy positioned UNICEF Romania as an advisor of choice about children’s issues for the Prime Minister who was installed as of August 2017. A regular mechanism of meetings and feedback was established with the new Prime Minister and his Office. On November 20, the Romanian Prime Minister, the President, line ministers, UNICEF National Ambassadors, worldwide sport champions, well-known TV anchors and journalists, local authorities and teachers partnered with UNICEF to provide an opportunity for the voices of vulnerable children to be heard.

UNICEF generated nine per cent of children-related news in Romania, a 50 per cent increase compared to 2016, and almost doubled the news related to its activities and initiatives. The number of UNICEF Facebook page followers in Romania reached 178,000, a 14 per cent increase compared to 2016.

OUTPUT 1 Central and decentralized authorities and key stakeholders increasingly monitor child rights through an integrated monitoring mechanism to support evidence-based policies for the well-being of disadvantaged children.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Romania contributed to the discussions around the preparation of the new Country Specific Recommendations that the European Commission issues every year for member countries. Key issues raised by UNICEF relate to: the scale-up of the community-integrated services using EU funds; education reform as it is proposed by the recommendations of the UNICEF-OECD study; the potential impact of fiscal and salary reforms; the capacity of local authorities to fund community services; and the need for improvement of health programme management, especially for mothers and children, and vaccinations, in the context of the measles epidemic in Romania.

Intense advocacy positioned UNICEF Romania as an advisor of choice about children’s issues for the Prime Minister who was installed as of August 2017. A regular mechanism of meetings and feedback was established with the Prime Minister’s Office.

Key recommendations based on evidence generated by UNICEF were incorporated in the Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations for 2017. The National Council of the Child Rights Authority agreed to a UNICEF recommendation to have annual progress reports prepared to follow the implementation of the measures recommended in the concluding observations. The Observations include recommendations to improve the data collection systems, generate disaggregated data, and ensure an independent child rights mechanism.
In 2017, UNICEF Romania supported the National Authority for Child Rights to access and use EU funding to initiate a major effort to close a large number of institutions and reintegrate nearly a third of institutionalized children into a family environment. The progressive scaling up of models supported by UNICEF is expected to be financed by EU funding in the first phase, before the state budget is leveraged. In the area of education, over US$123 million was allocated to scale-up components tested in the UNICEF model for quality inclusive education.

UNICEF continued to strengthen the capacity of the Deputy Ombudsman to report on child rights violations, particularly through the development of a special report on the rights of children in institutions. UNICEF also contributed to the debate on the establishment of a Child Ombudsperson, as a deputy of the Ombudsperson, through a draft law approved by Parliament and submitted for promulgation by the President of Romania.

The TransMonEE Country Analytical Report 2016 on Children’s Access to Justice was drafted through a consultative process with key ministries, agencies, the Ombudsperson Institution, professional associations and civil society. In 2017, evidence was generated with UNICEF Romania, including the costing and budgeting of the National Child Rights Strategy, and a situation analysis of children and women in Romania.

UNICEF Romania participated in the assessment of the six reception centres for asylum seekers and two public custody centres conducted by UNHCR in collaboration with other UN agencies and civil society organizations. One of the key issues identified was the presence of families with children in the public custody centres, for which the Inspectorate for Immigration will prepare an action plan.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, public authorities, civil society, private sector, media and general public are engaged in sustainable long-term partnerships to advocate and mobilize resources for vulnerable children in and outside of Romania

**Analytical statement of progress**

To advance child rights at the national and international levels and to support horizontal cooperation, UNICEF strengthened the partnerships with the Prime Minister’s Office, line ministries and local authorities. UNICEF Romania began to prepare the ground for Romania’s Presidency of the EU, proposing children and adolescents as one of the priorities advanced by the country. UNICEF supported Romania to strengthen its role as a champion for children and become a pathfinder country by joining the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. A new dimension of the partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office was initiated through the Department of Sustainable Development. The work aims to support the process of nationalizing the SDG targets for Romania through the new Sustainable Development Strategy that will cover 2018-2030.

Throughout the year, and especially on World Children’s Day, children had the opportunity to share their views and take on important roles. On November 20, the Prime Minister’s Office, the President, line ministers, UNICEF National Ambassadors, worldwide sport champions, well-known TV anchors and journalists, local authorities and teachers partnered with UNICEF to give vulnerable children a chance to express their voice. An innovative multimedia exhibition displaying photos, films and virtual reality features along with two artistic reproductions of rural traditional households presented UNICEF’s work in Romania to a wider audience.

Considering the development of the digital world and its impact on children’s lives, UNICEF
began to work closely with the Ministry of Communication and the Information Society. New partnerships were established with Members of Parliament and the European Parliament to make children a priority in the legislative processes.

UNICEF and the Romanian Football Federation began working together in an innovative partnership to promote QIE and to end violence against children, targeting the large base of football supporters.

To improve child-friendly ethical reporting and feature stories about children, UNICEF extended its partnerships with academia and the media, developing educational materials and encouraging innovation in reporting.

Children are higher on the public and political agenda as a result of long-term partnerships with TV and radio stations, print and online outlets, private advocacy, high-level events and field trips.

UNICEF generated nine per cent of children-related news in Romania, a 50 per cent increase compared to 2016, and almost doubled the news related to its activities and initiatives. The number of UNICEF Facebook page fans in Romania reached 178,000, a 14 per cent increase compared to 2016. Field trips with National Ambassadors Andreea Marin and Smiley as well as with Horia Tecau, the number one ranked doubles’ tennis player, and recently named UNICEF National Ambassador in Romania, were used to illustrate UNICEF’s upstream work. Through the Facebook page, 39 million people were reached.

Campaigns addressing violence in society and discrimination and a fund-raising campaign using an SMS pledge reached approximately 270 million potential impressions through 1,904 pro bono broadcast spots. Events generated an additional 291 reports in the media reaching more than 105 million potential impressions.

**OUTPUT 3** By 2017, public authorities, civil society, private sector, media and general public are engaged in sustainable long-term partnerships to advocate and mobilize resources for vulnerable children in and outside of Romania.

**Analytical statement of progress**
Please see the Output statement on Partnerships for Advocacy and Resources.

**OUTPUT 4** Support fund-raising activities funded by PFP solely

**Analytical statement of progress**
Local fund-raising mobilised US$870,000, with 75 per cent coming from monthly donations. More than 4,000 new direct debit contracts were signed, with a total gross income of US$76,000. A total of 13,471 SMS donor pledges were made following two direct response TV campaigns carried out in August-November in partnership with the two main TV news channels in the country.

One of the campaigns, “Together, a team for children!” is part of the three-year fund-raising and awareness-raising partnership that UNICEF signed with the Romanian Football Federation in early 2017. The campaign targets a new kind of public, football fans, and one TV spot features a
well-known football player. The campaigns also tested an integrated approach: TV, digital and offline, broadcasting the TV spot on the stadiums, during the matches of the Romanian national football team.

UNICEF initiated two new long-term corporate partnerships with JYSK and Lidl, and continued its partnership with Romgaz, the national natural gas company. Efforts towards identifying partners for a corporate pathway to pledge are ongoing.

OUTCOME 4 Monitoring and evaluation

**Analytical statement of progress**

For the past four years, UNICEF Romania explicitly and intensively focused on integrated programming, advocacy and communication, particularly around the development and provision of a cross-sectoral, community-based package of services, and combating violence against children.

The first challenge was to break down barriers within the office and establish internal coordination mechanisms and ownership. Developing an integrated approach and vision across sectors at the national and sub-national levels was required to connect these initiatives with sectoral objectives and EU policies. The development of several national strategies (especially the strategies on child rights, on parenting education, on early education and on social inclusion and the school segregation monitoring frameworks), and their associated budgets, provided the opportunity to introduce “cross-sectorality” into the national policy framework. A strong partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, and particularly the National Authority for Child Rights and with the MoE and its central agencies, proved to be essential.

UNICEF contributed to the development and functioning of the National Child Rights Council that brings together all relevant ministries, academia and NGOs (including children). At the sub-national level, UNICEF Romania supported the translation of the National Strategy on Social Inclusion into a county-level strategy, with a coordination mechanism.

OUTPUT 1 The Country Programme uses a cross-sectoral, human rights and result-based, gender-sensitive approach and risk management to evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation and fund-raising

**Analytical statement of progress**

One of the core roles of UNICEF in Romania, an upper-middle-income country, is to generate relevant and complex knowledge about children by testing innovations through local models. Ensuring that these models are independently evaluated and that high-quality evaluations are shared with partners are both key to influencing the development of policies.

UNICEF Romania fully observes the UNICEF Evaluation Policy and the updated United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation. As in previous years, UNICEF Romania used regional and global feedback mechanisms, and received positive feedback on its terms of reference for evaluations and inception reports. The summative evaluation of two modelling projects implemented in 2011-2015, the “School Attendance Initiative” (targeting multiple causes of dropout in the education system through interventions at different levels) and “First Priority:
No More Invisible Children” (modelling of a minimum package of services focused on prevention of separation of children from their families), were almost complete at the end of 2017. The draft reports were shared and discussed with national counterparts and will be used to inform and shape future models on MPS and QIE. Final reports will be submitted to the quality assurance mechanism for review by the end of March 2018.

The draft report of the formative evaluation of the “Opportunities for Adolescents” modelling project that tests integrated services for adolescents in urban areas was prepared. It is expected to be finalized by mid-2018.

The challenge of a limited evaluation culture at the national level influenced the entire approach to policy reforms. Often policies are deemed to be not working or ineffective without the time and resources necessary for implementation and evaluation. As well, policies and intervention not properly evaluated may be declared and considered good practices. In an effort to build the involvement of the country in horizontal cooperation exchanges, UNICEF Romania developed documentation methods to validate national practices, and invested in the development of national evaluation capacities.

OUTCOME 5  Development Effectiveness

Analytical statement of progress
Programme effectiveness is mainstreamed throughout all the outcomes.

OUTPUT 1  Programme Coordination

Analytical statement of progress
Programme coordination is mainstreamed throughout the other outcomes.

OUTPUT 2  Advocacy / Communication

Analytical statement of progress
Advocacy and communication are covered under Outcome 2-Governance and Partnership, particularly Output 2.2.

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<td>Costing and Budgeting National Child Rights Strategy</td>
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<td>Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Romania, 2017</td>
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Other publications
A Regard on the Participation to Education Using the School Cohort Analysis
OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education – Romania

Lessons learned

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Programme documents

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<td>ROLLING_MANAGEMENT_PLAN_Romania_2016-17 final.docx</td>
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