

Bulgaria

Country programme document 2013-2017

The draft country programme document for Bulgaria (E/ICEF/2012/P/L.4) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2012 annual session (5-8 June 2012).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2012 second regular session of the Executive Board on 14 September 2012.

Basic data†

(2010, unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	1.3
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	13
Underweight (% , moderate and severe)	..
(% , urban/rural, poorest/richest)	..
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2008)	13 ^a
Primary school enrolment/attendance (% net, male/female, 2009)	98/99
Survival rate to last primary grade (% , male/female, 2008)	94
Use of improved drinking water sources (%)	100
Use of improved sanitation facilities (%)	100
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% , 15-49 years of age, male/female, 2009)	0.1
Child labour (% , 5-14 years of age, male/female)	..
Birth registration (% , under 5 years)	..
(% , male/female, urban/rural, poorest/richest)	..
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 240
One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%)	94
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	97

† More comprehensive country data on children and women can be found at www.childinfo.org/.

^a The reported estimate is 5 deaths per 100,000 live births (2009), as presented in the TransMONEE report, 2011. The estimate of 13 deaths per 100,000 live births was developed by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, together with independent technical experts), adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. For more information, see www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality.html.

Summary of the situation of children and women

1. Bulgaria as a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2007 strives to converge towards EU standards in socio-economic development and cohesion. Bulgaria is bound by and contributes to the formulation of European strategic policy priorities and legislative frameworks. The National Reform Programme for 2011-2015 aims at sustainable growth and social inclusion and thus closely reflects the “Europe 2020” Strategy.

2. The Government of Bulgaria has made important steps towards reforming and modernizing child care and child protection systems in line with the 2008 recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and EU standards and adopted an ambitious National Reform Programme for 2011-2015 aiming at sustainable growth and social inclusion.

3. The country was hit hard by the global and regional economic downturn, and as a result exercises stricter fiscal discipline to preserve its macro-economic stability. Although the economy is showing some positive signs, the gross national

income per capita dropped¹ from \$6,603 in 2008 to \$6,240 in 2010. Unemployment rates have almost doubled, to 10.2 per cent,² with the 2011 youth unemployment rate estimated at 21.8 per cent. Gender disparities are present in the labour market, as women are paid on average 20 per cent less than men. To support necessary public sector reforms, the Government has access to EU Structural Funds, but still struggles to make full use of these resources.

4. Austerity measures have stalled the Government's goal of increasing the standard of living to 60 per cent of EU average by 2020 and have slowed down the progressive realization of children's rights. The social protection system is under strain, with budgetary allocations for social welfare shrinking from BGN 891 to BGN 691 million between 2009 and 2010,³ while at the same time the budget for child allowances decreased by 24 per cent.

5. It is to the Government's credit that while funds for means-tested social assistance were cut by more than half, funding for child protection services and for integration of children with disabilities were largely preserved.⁴ Through concerted efforts and careful prioritization, the country was successful in advancing child rights regarding protection. This was seen in the reduction of the number of children in residential care institutions, which dropped by over 40 per cent in terms of the rate per 100,000 child population between 2001 and 2010. During the last five years, the number of foster families increased tenfold,⁵ and in 2010 for the first time more children at risk were placed in alternative family care than in residential care, thanks to strengthened preventive child protection services and the development of innovative alternative types of care. Strong government commitment to system change, backed up by UNICEF advice and EU Structural Funds, played an important role in reorienting policies and resource allocations. However, the risk of institutionalization remains high for most disadvantaged and minority groups and children from poor families. Children with disabilities still represent 46 per cent of the total number of children in residential care.

6. There are still significant disparities among various groups in the population of 7.3 million, the majority of which comprises people of Bulgarian ethnicity and two dominant ethnic minority groups:⁶ Turks (8.8 per cent) and Roma (4.9 per cent). Nearly half of the child population (44.6 per cent)⁷ is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. While the overall poverty rate is 20.7 per cent, poverty affects two thirds (65 per cent)⁸ of families with three and more children, most of them Roma. Poor families live in remote rural areas and in suburbs of larger towns, often in inadequate housing. In settlements with Roma population, 47 per cent⁹ of dwellings do not have appropriate sanitary conditions, compared with the national average of 7 per cent.

¹ www.databank.worldbank.org.

² National Institute of Statistics.

³ Public Finance Management Survey, Oxford Policy Management, 2009/2010.

⁴ Public Finance Management Survey.

⁵ State Agency for Child Protection, www.sacp.government.bg.

⁶ 2011 census, www.nsi.bg. However, the EC estimates that Roma consist of 10 per cent of the population in Bulgaria, according to the EU Framework for Roma Strategies.

⁷ Eurostat 2011.

⁸ UNICEF Situation Analysis 2011.

⁹ 2011 census, www.nsi.bg.

7. An increasing number of children whose parents do not have health insurance cannot access health services, and 12 per cent of children 0-3 years of age are not assigned to a doctor,¹⁰ although the right to free access to health is guaranteed under the law. Overall, the infant mortality rate is low at 9.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, but in some areas of the country it is three times higher, up to 28.4 per 1,000.¹¹ The situation is worse in Roma settlements, where access to health services is difficult and parents and caregivers generally have received a low-level education and have inadequate parenting skills. In these settlements nutrition is also of poor quality and does not meet requirements for the age of the child. Moreover, sanitary conditions are below standard. The percentage of children with low birthweight has increased, and stood at 8.7 per cent in 2010.¹² HIV/AIDS prevalence remains low, although a 20 per cent annual growth of newly registered cases has been recorded.

8. Although there is a strong antidiscrimination policy in place, children's right to education is also marked by ethnic disparities. According to the 2011 census, 23.2 per cent of Roma children do not attend school, compared with 11.9 per cent among the Turkish minority and 5.6 per cent among ethnic Bulgarians. Roma girls are more likely than boys to drop out from school earlier. Overall, preschool enrolment rates at age 5 have reached 80 per cent, but primary school enrolment rates (grades 1-4) have declined, while the rate for higher levels (grades 5-8) was only 80.6 per cent in the 2010/2011 school year.¹³ The inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education has been promoted, and the Government is committed to pursuing further steps to improve access and outcomes. The overall quality of education needs special attention, as more than 40 per cent of Bulgarian ninth-graders were found to be functionally illiterate¹⁴ in the latest survey of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).¹⁵ Similarly, one in every five people 20-29 years old is functionally illiterate.¹⁶

9. Bulgaria has demonstrated that change within public administration systems is possible in a relatively short period of time: the recent experience in closing residential care institutions showed that capacity gaps related to budgeting and resourcing the provision of services for excluded children can be overcome. This success has indeed yielded important lessons that can be disseminated within the region and globally.

10. Further progress in the realization of child rights is within reach, and now entails tackling the root causes of child rights violations related to structural poverty, prevailing attitudes and social norms. To this end, the 2008 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child point to the need for systematic gathering and analysing of disaggregated data. This can be accomplished by establishing an independent body for child rights monitoring and strengthening the voice of the Ombudsman's Office to complement the State Agency for Child Protection, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Agency is the body

¹⁰ National Health Insurance Fund www.nhif.bg.

¹¹ UNICEF Situation Analysis 2011.

¹² National Institute of Statistics, 2011.

¹³ National Institute of Statistics, 2011.

¹⁴ Defined in PISA as being below level 2 in reading, which is considered by OECD as the baseline proficiency level: "the student is not able to locate one or more pieces of information in a text or recognize the main idea in a text or make low level inferences".

¹⁵ <http://stats.oecd.org/PISA2009Profiles/#>.

¹⁶ According to the 2011 census.

primarily responsible for child rights monitoring in the country. Civil society organizations (CSOs), too, need to continue to be empowered to assess and promote child rights beyond specific areas already receiving attention, such as child abuse and children deprived of liberty. There is a need to ensure that those initiatives are systematic and cover a wide spectrum of child rights concerns. The recently established National Network for Children, bringing together over 100 CSOs, is emerging as an important actor for the development of child-friendly policies.

11. Regarding emergencies, Bulgaria has moderate risk of major floods and earthquakes.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2010-2012

Key results achieved

12. The 2010-2012 country partnership between UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria pursued the goal of social inclusion of the most vulnerable children and families and aimed at mobilizing broad-based national support and resources for the progressive realization of children's rights.

13. The key priority of the country partnership over this period was to accompany the Government's comprehensive child-care system reform, which began in 2000. The partnership resulted in the above-mentioned reduction of 40 per cent in the rate of children in residential-care institutions. UNICEF contributed through giving policy advice and suggesting innovations for building the institutional capacity to manage the new system. This was accompanied by strong public awareness campaigns implemented at national and local levels, including media campaigns, which helped to create a conducive environment for deinstitutionalization. Relatively modest investment in modelling innovative services benefiting children in institutions set out alternative standards for child care and family support. This informed government policies, including the "Vision for Deinstitutionalization" national strategy and plan of action, adopted in 2011, which covers the period up to 2025, and enabled the leveraging of significant financial support from EU Structural Funds. There is a planned \$147 million of EU Structural Funds earmarked under the national strategy and plan of action for the implementation of five major programmes for deinstitutionalization and for strengthening the capacity of the social care system.

14. The country partnership reinforced the capacity of regional and local governments for planning and delivering social services for vulnerable groups, which contributed to improved efficiency of local governments in assessing the needs of the most vulnerable groups and better allocation of resources. The new planning methodology scaled up to the 28 regions of Bulgaria in 2010 after it had been applied in three regions in 2009, continues to be implemented with the support of EU funds, and was subsequently reflected in the Social Assistance Act. In addition, alliances with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society enabled greater civil society engagement in promoting child rights in Bulgaria.

15. UNICEF was successful in strengthening the support of Bulgaria for children's issues globally. According to a 2009 Gallup International survey, UNICEF is recognized as a credible organization working both at national and global levels,

and is therefore well positioned to nurture support for disadvantaged children, within Bulgaria and internationally. This was demonstrated in 2010 when the public donated over \$1 million for the children of Haiti, and almost the same amount for the development of family-based care for young children in Bulgaria.

Lessons learned

16. A key lesson drawn by stakeholders during the midterm review of the country partnership is that, even with the commitment of the Government, and well-developed strategies and policies in place along with access to EU funds and good practices, the initiative to promote positive systemic change for children is still fragile. Continued support and advice are needed to address the remaining bottlenecks. These include the low capacity of duty-bearers for preventive interventions at the local level, especially within the most marginalized communities; the weak linkages between social services and cash assistance; ineffective monitoring mechanisms; and the lingering resistance to change. The next five years will be critical to consolidate the gains brought about by social sector reforms and sustaining results for children. The aim will be to change the system from being one that reacts to child rights violations towards one that is built upon risk prevention and family support. Changing social norms and attitudes, as well as the behaviours of claim-holders will be vital to increasing the demand for and uptake of new services. It will be equally important to increase available funds for social programmes and maximizing their benefit for children in Bulgaria.

17. An assessment of budgetary allocations for social services, which was conducted as part of the 2009-2010 Public Finance Management Analysis, and the analysis of budgets of residential care institutions for children aged 0-3, carried out jointly by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance and UNICEF, both suggest the need to improve the equity impact in financing public services. While funds are available, additional mechanisms are required to enable more flexible re-direction of funds to the new, child-friendly services for excluded children. The process of developing child-friendly and equity-enhancing budgeting procedures needs to be continued and expanded.

18. The midterm review of the country partnership highlighted that a key strength of UNICEF in Bulgaria is its integrated approach combining policy advocacy, communication for development and private sector fundraising. These are proving successful in fostering overall social change for children and in creating public awareness of inequities and a sense of responsibility for addressing them. National media campaigns raising public awareness on selected child right issues kick-started the debate around the need for new policies and behaviour change in the public social sector system. Close collaboration with one of the key media networks in the country has become a strong channel enabling UNICEF to foster national dialogue in support of public sector reforms. The resource mobilization component, with its emphasis on advocacy, was found to reinforce the active participation and commitment of large numbers of people. There is an expectation by partners that UNICEF will continue with this mix of roles, but will also add a component of facilitating exchange of knowledge across countries, regionally and globally. This is considered to be the unique contribution of UNICEF, especially to a new, forward-looking mode of engagement with Bulgaria.

Framework of cooperation, 2013-2017

Summary budget table

<i>Area of cooperation</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Equity and social inclusion for children	1 500	7 000	8 500
Alliances and national capacity for child rights monitoring	1 500	5 000	6 500
Cross-sectoral	750	500	1 250
Total	3 750	12 500	16 250

Preparation process

19. This proposed five-year country partnership document was developed in close collaboration with government agencies, NGOs and the United Nations entities present in Bulgaria. It is based on data and information on disadvantaged children gathered through the 2011 Situation Analysis of children and women. The areas of cooperation were selected following the recommendations of the midterm review of the 2010-2012 country partnership, held in October 2011. The review outlined a shared vision of UNICEF role in the country, well into the current decade rooted in the aspiration of Bulgaria to contribute to regional and global knowledge on inclusion and equity and the unique position of UNICEF as repository of international best practices regarding the rights of children to development and protection.

Country partnership components, results and strategies

20. The main strategy of this country partnership is to enhance the national capacity for social inclusion and reduction of child poverty, furthering the realization of the rights of all children to equal access to education, health and protection and to strengthen child rights monitoring systems. The human rights-based approach will be the underpinning normative principle, which will be applied in all areas of work. Its main focus will be on the most vulnerable children and families, and it is expected that innovations promoted by this five-year collaboration will help to leverage more EU structural funds and other social funds to directly benefit the most disadvantaged children, as well as to support periodic reporting on EU membership processes. The cooperation will strengthen broad-based partnerships with civil society, the business sector and the media, and foster a framework of corporate social responsibility to mobilize support and resources for achieving local, national and global goals for children.

Areas of cooperation

21. **Equity and social inclusion for children.** In support of government efforts to build on inclusiveness for Bulgarian society, as described in Europe 2020 strategy of the EU, this component will contribute to the design of policies and the implementation of innovative practices focused on the most disadvantaged children:

children living in institutions or at risk of being institutionalized; children living in poverty, especially children of ethnic minority groups; children with disabilities; children, especially girls, who leave school before completing compulsory education; children in conflict with law; and adolescents out of school and out of work.

22. This component of the Bulgaria-UNICEF country partnership will contribute to more children from excluded and poor families benefiting from equal access to education and protection systems. This will be achieved through the following expected results: (a) an increased number of children in need of protection benefiting from family-based services, with particular focus on children from poor families, children with disabilities, and children aged 0 to 3 years old; and a significantly reduced number of children placed into institutions and the closing of additional institutions; (b) more young children and their parents, especially in marginalized Roma communities, who benefit from the application of intersectoral policies and innovative inclusive services for early childhood development, including child health for young children and early education; (c) an increased school enrolment in compulsory education, with a reduced number of adolescents who drop out of school, especially Roma girls, and increased inclusion in education for children with disabilities and children from ethnic minority groups; (d) a reduction of the number of children in conflict with the law deprived of liberty; and (e) increased access by adolescents out-of-school and not qualified to find work to new services for a “second chance at education and development”, a programme — to be designed with their active participation.

23. The country partnership will seek to achieve social equity by focusing on children who are currently excluded and have poor access to mainstream services such as health, education and protection. Approaches will be taken that: (a) reinforce institutional capacity through modelling innovative practices, including communication for development approaches to tackle harmful practices and increase demand for services, (b) demonstrate new services, reaching out to the most marginalized families and children, and (c) improve regulatory and budgetary support for the implementation of existing and new policies and services. The focus will be on operating at the local levels of governance, through strengthening the capacity and accountability of regions, municipalities and local service providers to respond to the needs of children. Efforts will be complemented at the central level by inter-sectoral coordination to ensure working models are reflected in policies, regulatory provisions and budget allocations.

24. The partnership will leverage the best expertise available domestically, in Europe and internationally for the development of universal policies and standards, and interventions tailored to specific local needs. These will include standards and interventions for the further advancement of the already well developed Bulgarian de-institutionalization strategy. This involves in particular the following measures: making accessible a continuum of preventive and support services for families at risk; the design and implementation of decentralized strategies for early childhood development that encourage positive parenting and enhance accountabilities in the health, protection and education systems for reaching out to the most marginalized families; active promotion of school enrolment and prevention efforts for children who drop out of school before completing the compulsory education, and providing these children with “second chance” opportunities; improved monitoring of the

inclusiveness and quality of education; and intersectoral cooperation and new services for children in conflict with the law.

25. Working “at scale” with local authorities in three regions with larger Roma and other ethnic minorities, the partnership will develop and test “social technologies” for delivering effective and culturally sensitive services in the most disadvantaged communities to promote rights relating to child health, education, development and protection. These innovative inclusive policies and services have the potential to become models for other countries. They will constitute a body of work on which to base horizontal cooperation in the region and contribute to global knowledge on effective equity-enhancing approaches in providing access to services for excluded children.

26. **Alliances and national capacity for child rights monitoring.** This country partnership component supports and complements ongoing efforts by the Government to strengthen the country’s capacity for systematic and comprehensive assessment of the results of its policies and standards, in terms of equity and social inclusion. In addition, it will help mobilize public and private sector support and collaboration in an alliance to foster social equity for children and to promote — in Bulgaria and internationally — a “post-Millennium Development Goals” agenda centred on children. It is also expected to generate additional resources for children, and create a conducive social environment for the country’s broader global role in support of international initiatives for children. Making maximum use of UNICEF global and regional presence, this component will enhance the sharing of knowledge and expertise from Bulgaria.

27. The overall aim is to remove the remaining bottlenecks to systematically assess persisting gaps in achieving equitable health and developmental outcomes for all children, so as to unlock the full potential of existing child rights monitoring structures and current child rights guarantee systems. This component will contribute towards the mobilization of support, capacity and resources by a national alliance for children (involving the Government, the international community, civil society, the private sector and the media) to significantly advance the rights of Bulgarian children and youth. The expected results are: (a) more disaggregated data on children, systematically gathered, with good practices documented and shared, as well as reliable information on child rights violations; (b) a strong and independent system, with the capacity and responsibility to promote child rights, regularly assesses the impact of public policies on excluded and marginalized children, and ensure accessible and effective complaint mechanisms for children and their representatives; and (c) “observatories” of the situation of children in the most deprived areas in the country through private-public partnerships.

28. Overcoming barriers to social inclusion will also require strengthening social norms of solidarity with children and families living in difficult conditions, cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity. This will generate a new “ethos for children”, which will be measured by: (a) an improved understanding of child rights and the capacity of media to monitor child rights violations with sensitivity to children; (b) better informed and engaged children and adolescents, and guarantees in place for their voices to be heard; (c) a corporate sector and media that systematically adopt standards (including ethical standards of reporting) to protect and advocate for child rights and create alliances in support of children; (d) a network of Child-Friendly Municipalities as strong advocates for child-friendly policies at the local

level; (e) a set of good practices and expertise from Bulgaria made available to other countries facing similar challenges; and (f) a general public that appreciates and supports initiatives for excluded children, in Bulgaria as well as in other countries.

29. Strategies to remove bottlenecks to equity and inclusion will focus on accompanying ongoing public sector reforms and will enhance the capacity of national institutions for: the collection of reliable and disaggregated data on children and equity mapping, knowledge management and facilitating the exchange of innovative approaches and practices across borders; regular monitoring and reporting on the impact of policies, regulations and budgetary decisions on excluded children; and setting up systematic processes for supporting existing and new independent bodies for child rights monitoring and redress mechanisms.

30. Overcoming persistent social barriers to inclusion will also call for sustained communication for development approaches. These will involve the general public, experts and local communities to tackle harmful traditional practices and social norms, and help to change attitudes, behaviours and societal beliefs about Roma and other minorities and excluded groups, such as children with disabilities and the children affected by institutional care. Efforts will also involve fostering the capacity of public administration, civil society organizations and the media to detect and report child rights violations, advocate for and monitor child rights implementation, and articulate joint positions on key issues related to the advancement and implementation of child rights; alliance-building with the business sector, media and prominent personalities for building a more socially responsible and equitable society; and work with relevant government bodies and local governments to create meaningful opportunities and mechanisms for the participation of children and adolescent boys and girls in making decisions on issues affecting their lives.

31. This component will engage the public, the media and the corporate sector in supporting children in Bulgaria and in other parts of the world. It will generate a diversified resource-leveraging portfolio using innovative resource mobilization approaches in support of UNICEF work in Bulgaria, international emergencies and UNICEF resources. Integrated advocacy with partners will be a key strategy. This will be supported through resource mobilization and communication campaigns focusing on communication for development and public appeals for the advancement of priority areas in child rights and well-being for children in Bulgaria and for international emergencies. These efforts will also promote the development of a strong base of supporters and social networks.

32. **Cross-sectoral.** This component will support important functions in the office, such as monitoring and evaluation, as well as operational costs, including utilities and travel, office support and other staff-related costs.

Relationship to national priorities

33. This country partnership was developed to support key national priorities. These include: (a) the National Reform Programme (2011-2015) and its Plan of Action, which identify social inclusion policies and reduction of poverty targets as a vital part of overall government policies; (b) the National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018, which sets key objectives for strengthening social inclusion and reduction of child poverty, ensuring equal access to education and health care and promoting child participation, and aiming at enhancing good parenting practices and

skills and support to families; (c) the national strategy “Vision for the Deinstitutionalization of Children in Bulgaria”, which describes the clear government commitments and plans towards reforming the child care and protection system in the best interests of the child through the provision of better support to families and children and the implementation of prevention programmes to reduce abandonment and exclusion; and (d) the National Strategy for Roma Integration 2012-2018, which sets out clear priorities in key areas such as health and education for Roma and other minority groups, providing measures for reducing the vulnerabilities of the most disadvantaged groups.

34. While Bulgaria does not have a United Nations Development Assistance Framework, there is good operational cooperation with other United Nations entities represented in the country, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Relationship to international priorities

35. The proposed areas of partnership are in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child and the EU Framework for the national Roma integration strategies, adopted in 2011, which aims to encourage Member States to adopt or develop further a comprehensive approach to Roma integration. National Strategies should set realistic, achievable national goals for Roma integration in four crucial areas (employment, education, housing and health) and allocate sufficient funding supporting Roma integration from national budgets, complemented by international or EU funding.

36. The EU growth strategy for the current decade provides a clear opportunity for leveraging investments and actions benefiting the most vulnerable groups, as it aims to develop a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, characterized by high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Education and social inclusion are given a special priority.

37. The proposed country partnership will also contribute to addressing the 2008 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These call for the full integration of minorities into Bulgarian society, increased support to families with children, in particular for those living in poverty and families caring for children with disabilities, as well as the development of a systematic approach to increasing public awareness of the rights of children to express their views and be heard. The country partnership will also support achieving progress on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

38. Bulgaria aims to develop its financial contribution as official development assistance for supporting development programmes. The proposed partnership with UNICEF will aim to further the contribution of Bulgaria to global support for children.

Major partnerships

39. The strategic intent of this Bulgaria-UNICEF partnership is to further enhance the capacities of key actors in the country to advance social inclusion and child

rights. Strengthening existing alliances and building new ones will be essential. Major national partners for the implementation of the component on equity and social inclusion include the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Social Policy, Education and Science, Health, Finance, Interior, Regional Development, and Justice; the Council of Ministers, the State Agency for Child Protection; the Agency for Social Assistance; Parliament; and local governments.

40. The component on alliances and national capacity for child rights monitoring will further enhance the partnership with the above-mentioned government Ministries and institutions. In addition, it calls for stronger links with the Ombudsman's Office to strengthen independent monitoring and with the National Statistical Institute for the collection of reliable and disaggregated data. Partnerships with local governments will be consolidated further through the National Association of Municipalities.

41. Alliances with civil society, CSOs, children's representatives, the media at national and local levels, as well as the private sector will be key to actively engage society in the promotion of the progressive realization of the rights of all children. Existing collaboration with institutes of research and science, universities and centres for policy development and analysis will be expanded, with the intention of improving evidence-based policy formulation for better planning and delivering results for children.

42. Closer collaboration will continue with the European Commission and the World Bank on social inclusion and child poverty, while exchanges with United Nations entities represented in the country (WHO, UNFPA and UNHCR) will be sought in health promotion and emergency preparedness for natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Monitoring, evaluation and cooperation modalities

43. The implementation of the partnership will be monitored through joint annual reviews and midterm progress assessment against established benchmarks and progress indicators. Key data, information and evaluations will inform the reviews. Baselines will be established in each main area of cooperation and results achieved will be measured through key indicators. These include the rate of children 0-3 years old in institutions, broken down by the children's backgrounds, and in the most disadvantaged areas: the percentage of local governments providing innovative early childhood development services and parenting skills, as well as the primary school enrolment rate for boys and girls. This will also involve an analysis of the capacities of institutions responsible for child rights as well as an assessment of the normative framework that is conducive to child rights and the consultative processes with adolescents on public policy and strategies.

44. Further collaboration will be sought with the National Institute of Statistics for improving disaggregated data collection and analysis, addressing data gaps for the making of evidence-based policy and strategy. In 2013 an independent assessment of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will be pursued, as part of the regular State reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

45. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will have overall responsibility for coordination of the cooperation for Bulgaria.