

TERMS OF REFERENCE**Consultant/Monitoring & Evaluation Expert
to support the implementation of pilot project on EU Child Guarantee in Bulgaria**

Start date: 1 September 2020
End Date: 31 August 2022
Duration: 24 months, full-time and partly office-based
Reporting to: UNICEF Project Manager

I. BACKGROUND

Child poverty is one of the most pressing concerns in today's world and a recognized impediment to sustainable economic and social development. A wealth of evidence proves the close relationship between child poverty and a long list of individual and social risks. Evidence from studies that examined the effect of lack of money (as distinct from parental education, attitudes or behaviour) has shown that children in lower income families have worse cognitive, behavioural and health outcomes in part because they are poorer, and not just because low income is correlated with other household and parental characteristics. Lack of financial resources – directly and through related effects on maternal mental health, parenting and the home environment – results in lower cognitive development and school achievement, and problematic social-behavioural development. These effects are stronger when children experience long-term poverty, and these harmful consequences of child poverty persist in the long term not only for affected individuals, but also for societies, economies and future generations. Globally, children are more likely to be living in poverty than adults, and a child living in poverty is also more likely to grow into an adult living in poverty.

Bulgaria is one of the two countries in the EU with highest shares of children who suffer from child deprivation (67.7%) and income poverty (27.5%). Every third child in the country (33.9% in 2018 or around 410,200 children) lives at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Particularly vulnerable are those children living in a single-adult household, in families with more than 3 children, children of Roma and Turkish ethnicity, those not attending school, children with disabilities, children living in remote rural areas or in regions with limited employment, children of migrant and refugee families. In 2015, the European Parliament proposed the establishment a Child Guarantee to support the eradication of child poverty in the EU. The Child Guarantee financial initiative aims to ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to free healthcare, free education, free early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition. The European Parliament has proposed that the European Social Fund Plus allocates EUR 5.9 billion for its implementation. A Preparatory Action was initiated by the EC, which includes a feasibility study and pilot projects at country level to test the implementation of the child guarantee on the ground.

II. UNICEF ROLE

UNICEF Bulgaria is in the third year of implementation of the Country Programme for the period 2018-2022. The overall goal of the country partnership is to support Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. One of the

key priorities is promoting national policies and strengthening national capacities for prevention and protection of all children and families against poverty and social exclusion, especially the most vulnerable ones.

UNICEF work in Bulgaria has focused on supporting the Government to develop, test and scale-up innovative models and approaches for improving the living conditions and increasing access and use of integrated services targeted at the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children. UNICEF support included pilot interventions in the areas of early childhood development, early childhood education and care and education, and child and family support in three target regions – Montana, Sliven and Shumen – such as home visiting for pregnant women and children under 3 years of age and parenting support; improving access of children in precarious family situation to early education and developing a model for inclusive pre-school education; developing a new social service – a Family Consultative Centre (FCC) – which provides support to children and families in the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. Building on the evidence, experience and lessons learned generated by UNICEF work with the Government, the Country Office will support the testing of the EU Child Guarantee, which aims at ending child poverty for all children in Europe, through the implementation of a 2-year pilot project.

Pilot project for testing EU Child Guarantee

The project will support the development and implementation of innovative approaches and services to ensure inclusion and access to services of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties and children in precarious family situations (including children living in poor and extremely poor households and Roma children) starting from birth through transition to school. It will apply an integrated strategy, which aims to improve community outreach, family engagement, quality and inclusiveness of mainstream services and strengthening of targeted services that address the specific needs of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties, children in precarious family situations and their families.

Based on a situation analysis, the project will work with regional and local authorities, health, education, child protection and social welfare services, NGOs, academia and other stakeholders to ensure access to home visiting, early childhood intervention for children at risk or with developmental difficulties and disabilities, inclusive pre-school education and integrated child and family support services for children with disabilities and developmental difficulties and children in precarious family situations (including children living in poor and extremely poor households and Roma children) and their families in three districts – Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora.

The project is expected to achieve the following main results:

- Evidence generated on the situation of children and families in three districts that informs policymaking, planning and programming at district and national levels;
- Coordination and management mechanisms established at national, district and municipal level to strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation, integration of policies and programmes and to increase knowledge sharing and beneficiaries' participation;
- Home visiting service and individualized guidance, information and support for nurturing care are provided to caregivers of children (0-3 years) with an enhanced focus on families in precarious situation and caregivers of children with disabilities in Sliven district;
- A system approach to early childhood intervention for children (0-3) with disabilities and developmental difficulties and their caregivers developed and introduced in the districts of Sliven and Stara Zagora;

- The capacities of kindergartens are strengthened for the provision of quality inclusive pre-school education services for children with disabilities and learning difficulties in the districts of Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora;
- The capacities of regional and local authorities and other stakeholders are strengthened for supporting the provision of inclusive pre-school education services in three districts – Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora;
- Outreach child and family-centered preventive and support services are developed in three districts – Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora – to identify and address the specific vulnerabilities of children and families in an integrated and comprehensive way;
- Cross-sectoral cooperation and case management at local level are strengthened, including through strengthening the capacities of Child Protection Departments (CPDs) to prevent child-family separation in three districts - Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora.

❖ *More information is provided in the Project Brief attached.*

III. OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be established to support UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee pilot project. The PMU will include the following staff to be hired by UNICEF: Project Manager, ECD & Education Expert, Child Protection Expert, Communications & Visibility Expert, Monitoring & Evaluation Expert, Finance & Administrative Assistant, and three Regional Coordinators. The Monitoring & Evaluation Expert will support UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the monitoring and evaluation of the EU Child Guarantee pilot project in Bulgaria as per the approved work plan and budget.

The Monitoring & Evaluation Expert will work under the direct supervision of the UNICEF Project Manager (Head of the PMU) and under the guidance of UNICEF Bulgaria Child Rights Monitoring Specialist and in close cooperation with the respective UNICEF staff and the other members of the Project Management Unit.

IV. SPECIFIC TASKS

Under the guidance of UNICEF, the Monitoring & Evaluation Expert will:

- Ensure evidence generation on the situation of children and families in the three pilot districts in order to inform policymaking, planning and programming at local, district and national level;
- Prepare a detailed Monitoring & Evaluation framework as well as Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the project in consultation with the key stakeholders;
- Draft Terms of Reference for the planned baseline study and coordinate its implementation;
- Guide the identification and setting of relevant baseline and output, outcome and impact indicators;
- Guide the generation of quality, disaggregated and comparable data related to the project activities;
- Ensure that there is reliable flow of information related to all project activities;
- Regularly report on the implementation of the M&E plan and the Logframe;
- Analyse the generated quantitative and qualitative data related the project activities;

- Support the adaptation of an innovative software system (Aurora) as a real time monitoring and evaluation tool for social and community workers to identify vulnerable children and families and deliver integrated services;
- Support with the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation capacities of the relevant institutions at national and local level, service providers, community, and civil society stakeholders;
- Develop participatory approaches for the active engagement of the stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation;
- Support with identification and documentation of the project approaches, good practices and lessons learned;
- Support knowledge sharing among project stakeholders and exchange of experience with national and international partners;
- Assist with the preparation of project progress reports and final report;
- Support project related events, including the meetings of the Monitoring Committees at national, regional and local levels, and project field visits by Government, UNICEF and other stakeholders;
- Participate when requested in the Regional Monitoring Committees and Local Monitoring Committees;
- Undertake any other project-related activities, as requested by UNICEF.

V. TIMEFRAME AND DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

It is expected that the assignment will take place in the period **1 September 2020 – 31 August 2022**.

VI. OFFICIAL TRAVEL

The consultancy will involve in-country travel to the districts of Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora and to the pilot municipalities to be selected.

Detailed quarterly travel plans will be developed for the PMU.

VII. REQUIRED EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE AND COMPETENCIES

- Advanced university degree in Social Sciences, Public Administration, Public Policy, Social Policy, or other relevant disciplines;
- Proved track-record of M&E experience;
- Knowledge of data management;
- Excellent management, organizational and communication skills; partnership building capabilities;
- Experience in working with other central administration bodies, district and municipal authorities, civil society and local communities;

- Ability to work under pressure; good negotiation and presentation skills; pro-activity and strong orientation towards results;
- Ability to manage partnerships across diversity of stakeholders;
- Respect for cultural diversity and human rights;
- Excellent oral and written command of Bulgarian and English;
- Availability for intense in-country travel.