

Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board
Template for delegations commenting on the draft country programme documents
2025 second regular session
(Updated: 12 June 2025)

Draft country programme document commenting period for Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Liberia, North Macedonia, Oman, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan: 10–30 June 2025 [18:00 hours Eastern Daylight Time]

Draft country programme document commenting period for Serbia, including RRF and CEP for Kosovo, under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999): 11 June–1 July 2025 [18:00 hours Eastern Daylight Time]

Draft country programme document commenting period for Türkiye: 12 June–2 July 2025 [18:00 hours Eastern Daylight Time]

Delegations are kindly invited to use this template to share their comments on the draft country programme documents being presented to the Executive Board during the forthcoming session.

Delegation name: The European Union

Draft country programme document: Draft CPD Serbia

In accordance with Executive Board decision [2014/1](#), draft country programme documents are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadlines stated above will be posted on the Executive Board website.

	Delegation's comments	Response(s)
General comments	UNICEF has been working for many years in Serbia therefore it has a solid understanding of the landscape needs and challenges. The current UNICEF draft Country Programme Document (CPD) for Serbia includes appropriate priorities. It is important that Serbia as a candidate country for EU accession achieves further progress in the reform process, which will help to contribute to the implementation of the Country Programme and advance child rights in Serbia, with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized. Therefore it should be stressed that UNICEF's country programme will, wherever possible, provide support to	All observations and comments are noted with great appreciation. UNICEF Serbia greatly values its longstanding partnership with the European Union, that supported significant national reforms in the areas of inclusive education, digital education, childcare reform, and juvenile justice. As mentioned in the CPD, para 23 <i>“The programme will contribute to Serbia's national priorities and support the advancement of key reforms in line with the European Union accession requirements.”</i>

	ensuring Serbian services, policies, strategies, laws and by-laws align with the EU <i>acquis</i> and European standards.	To strengthen this aspect, the alignment the EU acquis and European standards will be added in this paragraph 23. It is worth noting that EU standards are mentioned several times in the narrative (para 34; Resources and Results Framework page 12) and are a key benchmark of the: Outcome 1, Output 1 (page 12) <i>By 2030, high-quality and equitable maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent healthcare services are aligned with European standards and optimized to address the health needs of all children (including immunization and perinatal, environmental, and mental health), with a focus on the most vulnerable children and their families.</i> Outcome 5, Output 3 (page 16) <i>By 2030, there is coherence and collaboration between key stakeholders in advancing child rights based on the CRC, Sustainable Development Goals and European Union accession benchmarks.</i>'' The European Union is also strongly featured as a key partner in the narrative, in the para 30. ''UNICEF will build on its long-standing partnerships with the Government, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, the European Union, private sector, civil society, academia and the media, to bring innovative models to scale by leveraging domestic, public and private financing, and by providing policy and expert advice.'' The EU will be explicitly added as key partner for all relevant outcomes in the Resources and Results Framework (page 12-16).
	Although it is stated in the programme that it will support the advancement of key reforms in line with the European Union accession requirements, the partnership with the European Union (or EU Delegation in Serbia) was not mentioned anywhere in the	While all projects and thematic collaborations cannot be all listed in the CPD, due to their diversity and the word count limitation, the new IPA 2024 project "Juvenile justice" is fully included under the mention of the "national reforms

	CPD. Also, the new IPA 2024 project “Juvenile justice” that will start in January 2026 was not mentioned in the CPD.	and acquis”, and EU mentioned as a key partner for the Output related to Juvenile Justice.
	Many CPD objectives match the objectives of the Child and Youth Guarantees. A mention of the Child Guarantee, in particular to the existence of a Child Guarantee Contact Point would be welcomed.	The same applies to the Child and Youth Guarantees, which are major initiatives undertaken to advance national reforms and alignment with EU acquis.
	In addition, the CPD would benefit from an analysis of lessons learnt from the previous cycle and how these feed its strategy for 2026-30.	The CPD has been designed based on a thorough review of the Evaluations conducted in the previous cycle. The major lessons learnt are mentioned in the narrative, in the para. 22: <i>“This country programme is informed by UNICEF and United Nations evaluations and their recommendations. As Serbia gradually progresses towards high-income status, it becomes crucial to strengthen local institutions’ capacities, especially on public finance, and to leverage partnerships for high impact investments and results at scale for children. There is a need to prioritize inclusive development, considering the most vulnerable populations. The Gender Equality Programmatic Review 2023 highlighted the importance of addressing entrenched discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes.”</i> While the evaluation of the whole Country Programme is made every two-cycles, UNICEF Serbia has conducted major evaluations of its works conducted in the previous cycle 2021-2025, which informed the design of the future Country Programme. Due to the word limitations, all evaluations and lessons learnt could not be listed in the narrative, but the CPD was designed in light of the lessons learnt from the past cycle including : Evaluation of Models for Scale-up Potential in Serbia (2021), Child marriage programme evaluation (2022), Formative evaluation of key areas of pre-school education policy in Serbia (2023), Multi-country evaluation of national childcare reforms with a focus on deinstitutionalization - Serbia (2024), Evaluation of UNICEF work in Early Childhood Development (2018-2023) - Serbia Country Report (2025). All the completed

		evaluations are publicly available at: Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) UNICEF Evaluation .
	It would be beneficial to have more specific outcomes, having in mind the scope of the work done in Serbia. Specifically outcomes related to children from vulnerable population such as Roma, children with disabilities etc.	The CPD is solely focused on ‘closing equity gaps and addressing the most critical child deprivations by providing targeted technical assistance to drive systemic and sustainable change for children, especially the most vulnerable, including children from poor households, children in rural areas, Roma children, children with disabilities, children without parental care, children in institutional care, children in contact with the law, and refugee and migrant children. This will include policy and expert advice, targeted capacity-building, promotion of child-focused policies, budgets and plans, and leveraging of advocacy and public and private partnerships for greater scalability and impact.’(para 24). The focus on the most vulnerable children in Serbia is recalled and highlighted in all Outcomes and many Outputs of the Resources and Results Framework (pages 12-16). To support this approach, UNICEF makes specific efforts and investments to monitor the situation of vulnerable groups, by conducting regular Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (2019, 2025), that monitor the situation of Roma communities, children living in rural areas and children with disabilities.
Comments on specific aspects of the draft country programme document	<i>(Delegations providing comments may wish to include details, such as the page number, paragraph number, or page of the annexed results and resources framework.)</i> Page 4, para 14: there are more recent data regarding the rate of young people aged 15-24 years not in employment, education or training (23% in 2024).	The rate of NEET among young people aged 15-24 years in 2024 was actually 12.9 per cent, according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, ‘Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population’, https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2025/Pdf/G20255720.pdf The new data provided in the comment has been published very recently by the Statistical Office of Serbia, on 28 March 2025, after the finalisation of the first draft CPD. We

		thank the EU for this updated data, that will be reflected in the final narrative of the CPD.
	Page 9, para 45: “A new Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey will be conducted in 2029–2030 in partnership with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia” However, UNICEF in Serbia and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia have begun preparations for the implementation of the seventh cycle of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on 11/06. The seventh cycle of MICS in Serbia, including field implementation, will be conducted during 2025, so the result of the Survey will be published during 2026/27.	UNICEF and the Statistical Office of Serbia have indeed begun preparations for the implementation of the seventh cycle of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in 2025. While the results of the survey will be published in 2026, this remains a UNICEF commitment of the current CPD (2021-2025). The CPD narrative refers to the future MICS - the 8th cycle, that will be conducted in 2029-2030.
	Outcome 3 under Strategic Priority 2. Instead of: “3. By 2030, children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from quality services that prevent and respond to violence and family separation, and from inclusive and responsive justice and social protection systems, contributing to improved care and justice, and to safe, supportive environments for children.” It could be: “3. By 2030, children, <u>including</u> the most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from quality services that prevent and respond to violence and family separation, and from inclusive and responsive justice and social protection systems, contributing to improved care and justice, and to safe, supportive environments for children.”	The mention of “especially” has been intentionally chosen to emphasize the proactive and intentional focus of UNICEF on the most vulnerable. Inclusive approaches are otherwise strongly featured in the whole CPD narrative, when it comes to the inclusive access to quality health care, education, social and child welfare services. UNICEF Serbia looks forward to continuing its fruitful collaboration with the EU to advance child and youth rights and wellbeing in Serbia.