



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
11 July 2022

Original: English
English, French, and Spanish only

United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

Second regular session 2022

6–9 September 2022

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Country programme document

Bulgaria

Summary

The country programme document (CPD) for Bulgaria is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval at the present session, on a no-objection basis. The CPD includes a proposed aggregate indicative budget of \$4,250,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$15,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2023 to 2027.

* E/ICEF/2022/22.



Programme rationale

1. Bulgaria is an upper-middle-income country and has been a member of the European Union since 2007. It had a population of 6,951,482 in 2019, of whom 1,189,680 (17.1 per cent) were children. Ethnically, the population is fairly homogeneous, with Bulgarians making up 84.5 per cent of the total, followed by Turks (8.8 per cent) and Roma (4.9 per cent). With a Human Development Index of 0.816, Bulgaria is in the high human development category, ranking 56 out of 189 countries.

2. The Government has preserved macroeconomic stability and, before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the economy maintained a growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of between 3 per cent and 4 per cent. Government spending on health, education and social protection as a share of GDP is lower than average among European Union countries. In 2020, Government expenditure on education was 4 per cent of GDP (European Union average is 5 per cent), 5.9 per cent on health care (European Union average is 8 per cent) and 13.1 per cent on social protection (European Union average is 21.9 per cent).¹ The share of Government spending on social protection for families and children increased slightly, from 1.8 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 1.9 per cent in 2020. Budget allocations for children are not presented separately within the national budget.

3. Bulgaria promotes child rights, co-chairing the Group of Friends of Children and Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations. A member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Bulgaria co-facilitated the General Assembly resolution on the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (see A/RES/73/301). Bulgaria, with its two co-chairs of the Group of Friends, also launched the Global Pledge of Recommitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “For every child, every right”. Bulgaria also initiated the resolution on empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education, (see A/HRC/40/L.20/Rev.1), adopted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In 2022, Bulgaria was elected as a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF for 2023–2025, as evidence of the Government’s commitment to promote the rights of the child in all United Nations activities.

4. There is a high level of equality between men and women in Bulgaria. Equal access to education is guaranteed, and there is gender parity in girls’ and boys’ primary and secondary school enrolment rates. The number of women in tertiary education is high, and they are relatively well represented in information and communications technology, engineering and technology streams. In 2018, women’s labour-force participation rate (aged 20–64 years) was 68 per cent and slightly above the European Union average (67 per cent), while the gender employment gap was 7.7 per cent.

5. Violence against women remains a significant challenge, and there is limited access to shelter, rehabilitation and support services. The Government has proposed amendments to the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, proposing coordination between all relevant stakeholders, the regulation of prevention and protection programmes, and the establishment of specialized services.

6. Bulgaria, with its shared border with Türkiye, has been under significant pressure in recent years from an increasing flow of migrants and refugees, including unaccompanied and separated children. The number of these children has grown markedly since 2017, becoming a significant share of all children who apply for

¹ Statistics on this page are from Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (22 April 2022); Women’s employment in the EU (6 March 2020); Gender employment gap (12 April 2022).

protection. In 2021, 3,733 children applied for protection,² of whom 85 per cent were unaccompanied and separated. There has also been an increased number of Ukrainian refugees entering Bulgaria. After the first weeks of the conflict in Ukraine, their number stabilized at 47 per cent, one third of whom were children. This puts an additional strain upon the child protection system, which needs to be strengthened to meet the complex needs of refugee and migrant children, including those who are unaccompanied or separated.

7. The negative socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable groups, including children. Despite measures to provide additional support, poverty is expected to increase. The National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2030³ emphasizes the policies to reduce poverty and to support children and families. However, issues with cross-sectoral coordination hamper its effective implementation.

8. The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate among children (0–17 years) decreased significantly, from 45.5 per cent in 2016 to 33 per cent in 2021.⁴ However, it remained one of the highest in the European Union and significantly higher than the European Union average (23.9 per cent). The Gini coefficient of 39.7 per cent in 2021 is among the highest in the European Union, indicating significant income inequalities. The social protection system is well developed, but there are still gaps in coverage and adequacy. The share of children (0–14 years) covered by social protection schemes remains low at 48.6 per cent. The impact of social transfers on poverty reduction is much lower than in other European Union countries, and significant regional disparities negatively affect the realization of child rights in the poorer regions.

9. Bulgaria has made an essential shift from a traditional educational model:

(a) providing for inclusion in mainstream education of all children and adolescents, including those with special needs and children with disabilities

(b) enabling a learning environment, including building schools, training teachers, ensuring smaller class sizes and better classrooms

(c) providing support according to the individual characteristics of each child or student, introduced with the 2016 Preschool and School Education Act.

10. Despite reforms, the quality and inclusiveness of the education system continue to be a challenge. The persistently high rate of early leavers (aged 18–24 years) is decreasing but, at 12.8 per cent (2020), is higher than the European Union average (9.9 per cent). This affects disadvantaged groups in particular, such as children with disabilities, Roma children and children in rural areas or vulnerable situations. Low educational performance is a significant problem. The rate of underachievement for 15-year-olds in 2018, measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment, was 46 per cent in core subjects compared to the European Union average of 23.6 per cent. The enrolment rate of children younger than three years of age in formal care at 16.2 per cent is much lower than the European Union average (33.2 per cent), particularly in some regions and among vulnerable children. The lack of facilities is limiting participation, particularly in big cities.⁵

² Bulgaria, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, [Annual report of the State Agency for Refugees for 2021](#), pp. 9 and 16.

³ Bulgaria, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, [A National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion](#).

⁴ Figures given in this paragraph are from the National Statistics Institute, poverty and social inclusion indicators, and International Labour Organization data.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Country Note, Bulgaria, Results from PISA 2018.

11. Bulgaria has implemented its National Strategy Vision for Deinstitutionalisation of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria (2010–2025), to achieve significant progress in reforming its childcare system and ensuring the development of preventive and alternative community-based services for vulnerable children and parents. All large institutions for children with disabilities and for children deprived of parental care have been closed. The number of children placed in specialized institutions has been reduced by more than 97 per cent, from 7,587 in 2010 to 199 in December 2021.⁶ Despite these achievements, challenges remain over:

- (a) the quality of services
- (b) assessment and implementation of children's best interests
- (c) child protection system capacity
- (d) provision of integrated support to children and families at risk
- (e) effective gatekeeping.

12. The 2019 Social Services Act aims to improve the quality, effectiveness, financing and monitoring of social services and delivery mechanisms. When fully implemented, it is also expected to enable a significant shift towards the prevention of family separation and social exclusion, and provide a basis for the provision of integrated support, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children and families. Since the adoption of the Child Protection Act (2000), the child protection system has improved its capacity for prevention, identification and response to violence against children. In 2021, 1,387 cases of violence were reported to Child Protection Departments, an increase of 257 from 2020. However, most cases of violence remain unreported. A UNICEF national study revealed that one in two children in Bulgaria (47 per cent) had experienced some form of violence by the age of 18.⁷ Emotional violence is the most common kind (45.9 per cent), followed by physical violence (31.2 per cent), sexual abuse (15.6 per cent) and neglect (10.5 per cent). Violence is most common among children at school (38.3 per cent), followed by that in the community (37.6 per cent) and at home (30.9 per cent). A new Action Plan 2022–2024 is being prepared as part of the National Programme for the Prevention of Violence against Children, to strengthen the national response to violence against children.

13. The State Agency for Child Protection is responsible for guiding, coordinating and monitoring the State's child protection policy. The Ombudsperson is actively engaged in monitoring child rights, but the insufficient knowledge and awareness about child rights among the general public, national authorities, professionals, media, children and adolescents themselves, remains a crucial challenge. Improvement is also needed to monitor the situation and progress, and to coordinate and promote international and national commitments for children.

14. In Bulgaria, critical environmental and climate change risks affect children's rights, such as air pollution, inadequate water resources and waste management. Bulgaria has the highest rate of premature deaths due to air pollution in the European Union.⁸ The Bulgarian Environmental Performance Index score in 2020 was 57 and

⁶ Agency for Social Assistance, official data provided to UNICEF BCO, Ref. No. 62-00-0040#1, 12 May 2022.

⁷ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Study of Violence Against Children in Bulgaria*, UNICEF and Coram International.

⁸ European Environment Agency, *Air Quality in Europe*, 2020.

it ranked 41 among 180 countries.⁹ More than 21 per cent of children in Bulgaria are negatively affected by the environment and pollution.¹⁰

15. UNICEF is well positioned to assume a pivotal role in supporting the Government to connect with the actors from different sectors and engage in concerted efforts to produce results for children. Building on this strength, UNICEF will continue its strategic partnership with the Government, local authorities and civil society, and widen the scope of its partnerships at national and international levels to accelerate results for children.

16. The country programme is informed by evaluations, research and stakeholders' consultations that identify areas of prioritization and lessons learned. These include:

- (a) a stronger UNICEF voice and public advocacy on child rights
- (b) a move towards an overall partnership vision – including the Business for Results strategy, advocacy, fundraising and leveraging public and private resources.

17. The country programme evaluation suggests that the comparative advantage of UNICEF lies in its normative power in child-centred agenda-setting. This is supported by its organizational experience in equity-focused data-collection, policy design and service delivery methods. UNICEF has proved to be a trusted partner, capable of cooperating with a broad range of government and non-governmental actors. It aims to strengthen partnerships and engage the business community more strategically, with interventions developed collaboratively and resources leveraged more sustainably.

Programme priorities and partnerships

18. The overarching goal of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2023–2027 is that girls and boys, young children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, have a better start in life, are safer and receive better support to develop their full potential. UNICEF will operate a significant programmatic shift, focusing less on implementing projects, and moving towards a stronger convening and advocacy role. It will aim to place the issue of effective and efficient investments for children on the national agenda, with attention to the most vulnerable ones, to reduce the equity gaps. This will require intense work with research and data partners to produce and disseminate accurate and up-to-date information and evidence about the situation of children; what works and what does not work, and to highlight the value of investing in prevention, participation, engagement, community mobilization and capacity development at national and local levels.

19. The country partnership will be guided by the:

- (a) Convention on the Rights of the Child
- (b) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- (c) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- (d) UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

20. The partnership will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, the proposed European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the Council of Europe

⁹ Environmental Performance Index 2020, Country Profile Bulgaria.

¹⁰ UNICEF, Innocenti Report Card 17, UNICEF Research Centre, Florence.

Strategy for the Rights of the Child. The country partnership is fully aligned with national priorities and will support the implementation of the:

- (a) National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030
- (b) National Recovery and Resilience Plan
- (c) National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Social Inclusion 2030
- (d) National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Council Recommendation for the establishment of a European Child Guarantee 2030
- (e) Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021–2030)
- (f) National Youth Strategy 2021–2030
- (g) National Strategy for the Mental Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021–2030
- (h) National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma 2030
- (i) National Strategy for Promoting the Equality of Women and Men
- (j) National Programme under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021–2027.

21. Although the United Nations organizations in Bulgaria do not have a United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework, UNICEF is recognized as a credible convener with a strong track record of bringing together UN agencies, funds and programmes to share good practice and innovations and to promote policy advocacy on child rights, climate change and environmental action and on mobilizing resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. The strategies to drive change will include:

- (a) generating evidence and data
- (b) strengthening systems
- (c) enhancing cross-sectoral coordination
- (d) building partnerships and leveraging resources at national and European Union level to leave no one behind
- (e) advocacy and communication
- (f) social and behavioural communication
- (g) youth engagement and empowerment
- (h) fostering innovation, including technology-based solutions.

23. UNICEF will continue to focus on the most vulnerable groups of children.

24. UNICEF will work with national stakeholders to integrate the concept of the humanitarian development nexus into the implementation of its country programme. UNICEF strategies will continue to tackle risks faced by refugee and migrant children by strengthening the national child protection and welfare systems. This will mean that humanitarian and development efforts need to be more effectively connected, in order to achieve long-term collective outcomes that reduce need, risk and vulnerability. The UNICEF approach will emphasize several key initiatives, including:

- (a) strengthening systems

- (b) developing risk-informed programmes
- (c) engaging community participation, planning and preparing for emergencies
- (d) fostering partnerships, public awareness-raising and mobilizing vital resources

25. This approach also stems from the basis that programmes should be designed and delivered in a complementary manner to respond earlier and more effectively to immediate needs while, at the same time, addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience to ensure long-term progress and impact.

26. UNICEF will support line ministries, agencies, local authorities, civil society, think tanks and academia to strengthen national inter-institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration policies. UNICEF will provide technical assistance to develop and scale up tested programmes for improved outcomes for disadvantaged children and for improved social-emotional and digital skills, and it will leverage resources from corporate partners to support child-oriented policies, particularly for children with disabilities.

27. Negative attitudes towards, and stereotypes about, children with disabilities, children belonging to ethnic minority groups and other vulnerable groups, as well as tolerance for violence against children, and stigma towards mental health issues, are related to recurring harmful practices and structural barriers across all sectors. UNICEF will address them with a holistic social and behavioural change model to make systems more responsive, build professional capacities, strengthen the self-efficacy of parents and caregivers, and empower adolescents and young people to participate in decision-making and be agents of positive change. This model will strengthen the programme's effectiveness by putting in place a set of standards for quality and at-scale programming – on behavioural evidence generation, coordination, community engagement, feedback mechanisms and budgeting – which enable transformative results for children.

Early childhood development and child protection

28. The long-term vision for change is that, by 2027, boys and girls, children and adolescents, will realize their rights to thrive and reach their full potential; will be protected from violence, exploitation and abuse and are supported to live in a safe and nurturing environment.

29. UNICEF will partner with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the State Agency for Child Protection, agencies, municipalities and other stakeholders to:

- (a) strengthen support for early childhood development within the health system and support social and education systems to:
 - i. provide parenting support for nurturing care
 - ii. ensure the early identification of children's developmental difficulties within primary health-care provision
 - iii. develop and implement cross-sectoral referral mechanisms for children with developmental difficulties from primary health care to family-centred early intervention services in the community and to early inclusive education and care
- (b) strengthen key stakeholders' capacity to provide accessible, adequately funded, quality and inclusive early childhood education and care

(c) help to prevent family separation and improve access to good-quality preventive and alternative care services and integrated support

(d) strengthen the capacities of child protection professionals and improve access to preventive and response strategies, programmes and services related to violence against girls, boys and women.

30. UNICEF will focus on the root causes of violence to more effectively uphold the rights of girls, boys and women to live free from abuse. It will address power differentials based on gender inequality or age and intersections between violence against children and women. UNICEF will contribute to decreasing the tolerance of violence against girls, boys and women and will support:

(a) legislative reform for children in conflict with the law

(b) girls, boys and women victims and witnesses of violence and crime, and strengthen the prevention system.

31. UNICEF will continue to build the capacity of child protection professionals to identify, respond and react to violence against girls, boys and women and strengthen a coordinated and integrated service delivery for children, women and families across sectors.

32. To ensure that no child is left behind, UNICEF will focus its programmes on children at greatest risk, particularly those with disabilities or who are experiencing discrimination, mental ill-health, violence and other adversities, such as conflicts and humanitarian crises. This action will include strengthening service provision and child protection systems to prevent further harm to children experiencing violence and to support their recovery, resilience and access to justice.

Quality and inclusive education and adolescent empowerment

33. The country partnership aims to increase access to better quality and inclusive education services. The long-term vision of change is that, by 2027, girls and boys, children and adolescents, will fulfil their rights to quality inclusive education, participation and engagement so that they can contribute to their well-being and that of their communities and society.

34. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Culture, corporate partners, youth organizations and adolescents as agents of change, this programme component will aim at

(a) strengthening education systems to increase access to inclusive and good-quality learning

(b) increasing opportunities for participation in diverse cultural activities

(c) providing all adolescent girls and boys, including the most disadvantaged, the opportunity to build their skills for a successful transition to adulthood and decent work

(d) strengthening systems and mechanisms for meaningful participation to ensure that all adolescent girls and boys, including the most disadvantaged, can build connections, voice their opinions and engage with social issues and contribute to their own and their societies' mental health and well-being.

35. Ensuring that no policy regarding children should be designed without their voices is enshrined in the proposed European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee, and in the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child. UNICEF will engage with children and adolescents and empower them to participate and co-create programmatic solutions, information and communication materials. Greater emphasis will be placed on consistent engagement

with young people through various channels, including U-Report, the Youth Council established by UNICEF and other youth networks, supporting and empowering them to participate in social, economic and civic life and to contribute to building a more resilient and just society.

36. UNICEF will foster innovation for improved access to education and early childhood education and care by working with relevant stakeholders to introduce technology-based solutions for children with disabilities and the enhanced use of assistive technologies for alternative and augmentative communication in education. UNICEF will support the scaling up of a web-based method of enhancing adolescents' media and digital literacy, ensuring that it reaches the most disadvantaged. UNICEF will harness the power of innovation and digitization to connect and engage adolescents and empower them to cope with mental health challenges and maintain healthy behaviours to support mental well-being.

37. UNICEF will engage with a wide range of partners to raise awareness of:

- (a) the barriers to education for the most disadvantaged children
- (b) violence against children
- (c) mental health issues.

38. Furthermore, UNICEF will build stronger partnerships with businesses on the need for skills such as critical thinking, life skills, digital literacy, and social-emotional skills to introduce an effective mechanism for mapping the relevance of skills development policies and matching them with labour-market needs. UNICEF will engage with partners and young people to generate awareness of mental health issues and put mental health on the political agenda, promoting dialogue on national policies and programmes and building political commitment for actions and investment in supporting the mental health of children, adolescents and families.

Social inclusion and child rights monitoring

39. The long-term vision of change is that, by 2027, child and adolescent poverty, vulnerabilities and exclusion are significantly reduced, and child rights are strengthened as a result of more efficient, effective, equitable social sector policies, programmes and services.

40. This programme component will aim at:

- (a) strengthening policies and programmes addressing child poverty and social exclusion
- (b) enhancing budget allocations made for child-related policies and programmes and tracking child-related expenditures
- (c) strengthening the promotion of child rights and the use of good-quality evidence for policymaking, monitoring and reporting.

41. UNICEF will work with the MoLSP and national stakeholders towards systemic changes, building on the lessons gained from testing the European Child Guarantee. The enabling policy framework will be strengthened in order to reduce child poverty and social exclusion and, through the implementation of the National Action Plan for implementing the Council Recommendation for the establishment of a European Child Guarantee 2030, more vulnerable children will be provided with effective access to essential services. UNICEF will support national efforts to expand the coverage of the social protection system, strengthening its resilience and inclusiveness.

42. UNICEF will work to develop a child-focused method to measure public expenditure and strengthen national capacities for maximizing the effectiveness of budgets in achieving child-specific objectives. Budget transparency on child expenditures will be improved, and data and evidence generated will inform financial decisions and lay the foundations for better public investments in children. UNICEF will continue to support national partners to adopt and use sustainable monitoring systems for child rights, based on international and national commitments to children. These systems will be informed by cross-sectoral quality disaggregated data that considers the most vulnerable children.

43. UNICEF will engage with a wide range of actors to develop innovative mechanisms for generating evidence and data that are social and behavioural change sensitive and will advise ministries and relevant partners on improving data management systems. UNICEF will build and disseminate evidence, including documenting methodologies, standards, costing and training programmes, to consolidate services and programmes supported by the previous country programme and ensure they are widely promoted and scaled up.

44. UNICEF will work with a wide range of actors, including government, civil society and international financial institutions, to address the needs of those most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation. It will encourage measures that protect children's rights and best interests and that promote explicit and meaningful references to children.

Summary budget table

<i>Programme component</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Early child development & child protection	1 685	6 104	7 789
Education & youth empowerment	1 165	5 461	6 626
Social inclusion & child rights monitoring	794	1 327	2 121
Programme effectiveness	606	2 108	2 714
Total	4 250	15 000	19 250

Programme and risk management

45. The country programme outlines planned contributions by UNICEF to achieve national results for children and serves as the primary unit of accountability to the Executive Board for results and resources assigned to the programme at country level. The accountability of managers at country, regional and headquarter levels is prescribed in the organization's policies and procedures.

46. The programme will contribute to fulfilling child rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of Bulgaria will continue to solidify its commitment to child rights with the adoption of the various European Union strategies on children and young people and the latest recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Annual programme reviews, co-chaired by UNICEF and the Government, will monitor progress in programme delivery and resource mobilization to verify achievements, analyse constraints and identify initiatives to improve

programme effectiveness. UNICEF will continue to maintain close interaction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MoLSP as the two coordinating agencies for the country programme.

47. Programme fundraising efforts will target
 - (a) private sector, philanthropic and individual contributions
 - (b) European Union-based financing channels
 - (c) blended finance options that expand on the global environmental, social and governance market.
48. Fundraising will focus on building broad partnerships and new mechanisms aimed at strengthening national systems that serve children.
49. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated barriers to successful programme implementation; it has fragmented efforts and strained capacity to respond to increased migratory flows and regional humanitarian developments. Additionally, the crisis in Ukraine is refocusing the programme, enabling children from Ukraine to benefit from the resilient childcare system in Bulgaria.
50. These risks will be mitigated by
 - (a) strengthening national capacities for intersectoral coordination
 - (b) building sustainable institutional mechanisms as a basis for the continuity of action
 - (c) working with national partners on risk-informed programming emergency preparedness and response planning.

Monitoring, learning and evaluation

51. UNICEF country programme performance will be monitored through national and UNICEF standard indicators, and will include data disaggregated by sex, age and issues specific to girls and women.
52. UNICEF will support efforts to strengthen the collection, accessibility and use of data on children, disaggregated to pinpoint inequalities, including a gender lens to analyse barriers and inform gender-responsive programmes. A data alliance will be established with Government authorities, civil society, academia, other United Nations agencies, European Union entities and the private sector to boost data generation and exchange good practices.
53. Together with the relevant ministries, UNICEF will document lessons learned to inform policies and programming. Analysis of the effects of COVID-19 and the recent conflict in Ukraine will be included in the scope of evaluations to inform adaptive programming.

Annex

Results and resources framework

Bulgaria – UNICEF country programme of cooperation, 2023–2027

Convention on the Rights of the Child: (relevant articles of the Convention) Articles 1–4, 7–10, 12–31, 34–37, 40–42
National priorities: Sustainable Development Goals: 1–5, 8–11, 13, 17 (and/or national goals)
Related UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 Goal Areas: 1, 2, 3, 5

UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
					RR	OR	Total
1. By 2027, all boys and girls, young children and adolescents, including the most vulnerable, will enjoy their rights to thrive and develop to their full potential and be protected from violence, exploitation and abuse. They will benefit from equitable access to cross-sectoral services and will be supported to live in a safe and nurturing environment.	Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education B: 79.1% ^a 58% (Roma) ^b T: 90% 65% (Roma)	Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), National Statistical Institute; Action Plan to National Strategy for Equality Inclusion and Participation of the Roma	1. By 2027, health, social and education systems will better integrate legal and normative frameworks, standards and tools that empower mothers, fathers, and caregivers to provide nurturing care, ensure the detection of developmental risks and support family-centred early intervention for children at risk of developmental difficulties. 2. By 2027, national institutions, local authorities and other key stakeholders will have strengthened their capacity to provide accessible, adequately funded, quality and inclusive early childhood education and care services for all young children 0–7, including the most	MoES, local authorities, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP), (MoH), State agency for child protection, State Agency for refugees, Agency for Social Assistance, Bulgarian universities, National Police Academy, National Justice Institute, National Council for Child protection, Council for refugee women, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice,	1 685	6 104	7 789
	Children 0–17 years living in residential care B 3 427 (2020) T: 3 000 (2027)	Official data by Ministry of Health (MoH), Agency for Social Assistance, National					

^a National Statistical Institute, Net enrolment rate in Pre-primary education (ISCED-0), <https://nsi.bg/en/content/3550/net-enrolment-rate-population-education-system>

^b Fundamental Rights Agency, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Roma – Selected findings, 2016.

UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
					RR	OR	Total
		Statistical Institute	disadvantaged such as Roma children, poor children, children with disabilities and children living in rural areas and refugee and migrant children.	National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, municipalities			
	A national system for early childhood intervention for children with disabilities and developmental delays has been established. B: Non-existent T: Established	Report	3. By 2027, girls, boys and adolescents, including the most vulnerable, will be supported to realize their right to live in a family and have improved access to good-quality preventive and alternative care services and integrated support.				
	Increase in reporting of violence against children due to strengthened capacity of professionals, accessibility to services and awareness-raising. B: 1 387 in 2021 T: 2 081 in 2027	Violence against children surveys and data from the health care, child protection, social services and justice sectors	4. By 2027, girls, boys and adolescents in Bulgaria, including the most vulnerable, will be supported to realize their right to protection from violence, exploitation and abuse and will benefit from strengthened capacities of child protection professionals and improved access to preventive and support programmes and services.				
2. By 2027, girls and boys, children and adolescents, particularly the most disadvantaged, realize their rights to a good-quality inclusive education, participation and engagement so that they have the competence and are empowered to contribute towards their well-being and that of their	Number of primary school-age out-of-school children B: 43 662 (21 250 girls; 22 411 boys) T: 20 000 (10 000 girls, 10 000 boys) Number of lower secondary school-age out-of-school children B: 40 580 (20 524 girls; 20 056 boys)	UNESCO Institute of Statistics database, MoES (Inter-institutional mechanism for enrolment)	1. By 2027, children and adolescents will be supported to realize their right to education, and will benefit from a strengthened education system at national and local levels that ensure increased access to inclusive and good-quality learning and skills-building for all adolescent girls and boys, including the most disadvantaged (Roma, adolescent girls, rural, poor, children with disabilities, unaccompanied /separated	Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Youth and Sport, MoLSP, parliament, Ombudsman, youth organizations and youth clubs, private sector, technology start-ups, digital influencers	1 165	5 461	6 626

UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
					RR	OR	Total
communities and society.	T: 20 000 (10 000 girls; 10 000 boys); Young people at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in core subjects ^c B: 46% T: 30%		children) allowing them to build their competencies for a successful transition to adulthood and decent work. 2. By 2027, children and adolescents, including the most disadvantaged, will be supported to realize their rights to be heard, will benefit from strengthened systems and mechanisms for meaningful participation and will have opportunities to build connections, will be engaged with social issues and will contribute to their own and their societies' mental health and well-being.				
	Number of adolescent girls and boys who participate in or lead civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF supported programmes B: 59 T: 1 500	Reports and data from partners					
3. By 2027, child and adolescents' poverty, vulnerabilities and exclusion are reduced, and child rights are strengthened as a result of more efficient, effective and equitable social sector services, programmes and policies.	Number of children living in poverty according to (a) international extreme poverty line; (b) national monetary poverty lines, or (c) national multidimensional poverty lines. B: 2020: (a) N/A; (b) 24.2% or 292	National Statistical Institute Eurostat	1. By 2027, national institutions, local authorities and other key stakeholders will have strengthened their capacity to develop and implement evidence-based, adequately funded and equity-focused policies and programmes addressing child poverty and social exclusion. 2. By 2027, key decision makers will have enhanced capacities and ability to apply	MoLSP, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finance, National Statistical Office, State Agency for child protection, Agency for Social Assistance, Ombudsman, parliament, civil society	794	1 327	2 121

^c Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [Country Note, Bulgaria, Results from PISA 2018](#)

UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
					RR	OR	Total
	500; (c) 33% or 399 700 T: (a) N/A; (b) 23.3% (c) 29.2%		sufficient and equitable budget allocations made for child-related policies and programmes and establish monitoring and tracking expenditure.				
	Budget allocations to social sectors (health, education, and social protection) as a share of GDP B: (2020) health 5.9%; education 4%; social protection 13.1% T: health 6.5%; education 5%; social protection 15.5%	Ministry of Finance	3. By 2027, national authorities, independent institutions, civil society organizations and relevant stakeholders will have strengthened their capacity to monitor and report on international and national commitments to child rights, based on good-quality evidence; to raise awareness, advocate and build partnerships for improved promotion of child rights; and to safeguard the tracking of expenditure.				
	Proportion of child population covered by social protection floors/systems B: 2020: 48.6% of children 0–14 T: 65%	ILO, Agency for Social Assistance					
4. Enhanced programme effectiveness	Standard performance indicators	UNICEF Results Assessment Module	Programme coordination: public relations; planning, monitoring and evaluation; advocacy and partnerships; social and behaviour change		606	2 108	2 714
					4 250	15 000	19 250