

Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board

Template for delegations commenting on the draft country programme documents

2022 second regular session

Draft country programme document commenting period (except for the draft CPD for Gabon): 14 June to 5 July 2022 [18:00 EST]

Draft country programme document for Gabon commenting period: 17 June to 11 July 2022 [18:00 EST]

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

Delegation name: *European Union*

Draft country programme document: *Montenegro*

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 deadline stated above will be posted on the Executive Board website, and considered by the requesting country, in close consultation with UNICEF.

	Delegation's comments	Response(s)
General comments In Montenegro UNICEF is a strong partner to the EU and to the Accession process. Contacts with NEAR D2, D5 and the EUD are regular and valued. The document reflects this close working relationship.	Key focus on EU Accession well noted. This should continue to be reinforced and embedded in development of UN work in country.	The 2023-2027 Country Programme is a prime opportunity to support smart, inclusive, evidence-based reforms that can help Montenegro to advance with its dual priorities – meet the EU Acquis and policy documents on the rights of the child (EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024) and the child-related goals under the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

<p>Comments on specific aspects of the draft country programme document</p>	<p>Poverty</p> <p>Protection from poverty, violence and exploitation 26. This component will engage in public advocacy about the harmful effects of poverty, adversity, violence, and exploitation. It will promote institution-building and community mobilization. UNICEF will collaborate with key partners and across the sectors to build commitment to an evidence-based national multidimensional poverty reduction strategy, supported by effective monitoring of its implementation. It will advocate for an expanded system of shock-responsive social and child protection that reaches children and families living in poverty and children who need protection.</p> <p><i>We would request a description on how UNICEF intends to tackle this priority in Montenegro particularly if they rely in EU funding to achieve results in this area.</i></p> <p>Early Childhood Development</p> <p>29. To create an enabling, nurturing environment in which every child can thrive, technical support will be given for the implementation of an integrated early childhood development (ECD) strategy and the development of relevant policies and plans to promote young child health and development.</p> <p><i>In fact the development of ECD policy is envisaged under the ongoing EU and UNICEF project on ECD, but noted here that it is</i></p>	<p><i>Response:</i> UNICEF will support the Government to introduce the Child Guarantee, which is planned to be funded under the EC IPA III instrument, for the most vulnerable children facing multi-dimensional poverty. Three main pillars of support:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Institutional reform</u>: strengthening and reforming main institutions, staff capacity building and reorganization of work procedures¹ 2) <u>Target groups and minimum packages</u>: development of innovative services and minimum packages of services for specific groups on children² to be provided at local level 3) <u>Financing Mechanism</u>: assessment of financial implications, development of financing scenarios, formulation of financing strategy and financing mechanisms <p>In addition, UNICEF will work to increase the coverage of the Child Allowance (CA) to include all children in 2022 and reach 50% of families in Montenegro and will support further strengthening the CA scheme and linking cash and services support³. Lastly, UNICEF will provide technical assistance to the Government to prepare new Strategy for the Development of Social and Child Protection System, new Law on Social and Child Protection, and a strategy for poverty reduction.</p> <p><i>Response:</i> With European Commission support, the first national ECD strategy—although originally planned in 2021, due to delays caused by COVID-19 crisis and two government transitions—will be finalized in 2022. Despite a change of Government, ECD remains a priority and is prioritized in the annual plan of the Ministry of Health. Implementation of the ECD strategy is envisaged to start in 2023.</p>
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¹ Based on Roadmap for Social and Child Protection System Reform and Analysis of Centres for Social Work recommendations.

² Based on Roadmap for Social and Child Protection System Reform, Roadmap for the Transition from Institutional towards Family and Community Based Care and Beneficiary Assessment Recommendations, MICS and MODA results

³ Based on Operational Assessment of the Child Allowance and Related Social Assistance Programmes in Montenegro, implemented in summer 2021.

	<p><i>still remains to developed in 2023 (it was originally planned in 2021).</i></p> <p>30. The programme will contribute to health workers’ strengthened technical knowledge and skills with a focus on immunization, on maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition, and on counselling and interpersonal communication with families. The programme will advocate for improved workforce capacity at the primary health care level and integrated prevention-focused services.</p> <p><i>Since the ongoing ECD project is dealing with strengthening skills of health workers’ and on counselling and interpersonal communication with families. Can UNICEF explain what will be the focus of UNICEF’s future intervention(s), and how will they differ from the ongoing one?</i></p> <p>32. UNICEF will advocate with government and other partners to expand accessible preschool infrastructure and quality services, especially for the most vulnerable such as those with disabilities and from Roma and Egyptian communities, and to implement the ECE strategy.</p> <p><i>Access to the pre-school education and quality services to children with disabilities and from Roma and Egyptian communities are included in the project proposal submitted to the EUDEL by UNICEF. However, this may not be addressed at the first phase of the planned project. We are interested to know if UNICEF has more ideas (concepts) on how to support and to further inclusive education in MNE.</i></p>	<p><i>Response:</i> Future interventions will build on the ongoing EU and UNICEF project on ECD and will have an expanded scope and encompass an additional number of ECD professionals. This includes continuous strengthening of technical and interpersonal communication skills, standardisation and accreditation of public health care institutions, support the implementation of the Strategy on early and preschool education 2021-2025, in line with the recommendations given in the 2021 EC report for Montenegro.</p> <p><i>Response:</i> Yes, a variety of interventions are planned, including— but not limited to: capacity building for preschool teachers and support staff to apply needs-based support to children with disabilities, including by use of digital tools and assistive technologies; expanding the current model of multi-sectoral cooperation at local level from three to all twenty-four municipalities in Montenegro; piloting the Caring Families program for parents in several preschools and primary schools and resource centers; conducting regular outreach activities for parents and caregivers of Roma children; capacity development for the implementation of the enhanced Individual Development and Educational Plans for children with disabilities; and technical support for a more effective use of the system of supplementary/catch up classes and use of the MEIS based application for Early Detection of Students at Risk of Drop Out.</p>
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