



BULGARIA CHILD PROTECTION THEMATIC REPORT 2018

unicef  | for every child

BULGARIA
CHILD PROTECTION THEMATIC REPORT
2018

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CAC	Child Advocacy Centre
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
DI	De-institutionalization
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
EU	European Union
FCC	Family Consultative Centre
JJA	Juvenile Justice Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Social Services Act
UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive summary

The overarching goal of the current Country Partnership (2018 – 2022) between UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria is 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. The country partnership is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and is guided by the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well by the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. It will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021) and the European Commission Recommendation, “Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage”. The country partnership is fully aligned with national priorities and will support government efforts to build an inclusive society, as described by the Europe 2020 Strategy of the EU.

In 2018, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the realization of the rights of every child with a special emphasis on the most disadvantaged and excluded children, providing policy advice and technical assistance, facilitating national dialogue, generating evidence and enabling knowledge exchange, modelling and supporting the scaling-up of new approaches and services, leveraging resources from different sources and building strong alliances for advancing child rights in Bulgaria and abroad.

A significant contribution to the realization of a child’s right to live in a family environment was made through the work of the 5 Family Counselling Centres (FCCs) in Shumen, Veliki Preslav, Novi Pazar, Montana and Berkovitsa who supported 1,688 families promoting positive parenting practices and 2,334 children as a result of which they have now better access to kindergarten, health care and education. Based on the experience and good practices of the FCCs, the Agency for Social Assistance up-dated the national guidelines for social services and incorporated the specific approach and programmes of the centres for prevention of family separation and outreach support, which is a basis of the national scaling up plan.

In 2018, UNICEF also supported the development of a comprehensive training programme for foster care commissions which will be used nationwide. This builds upon the training programme for foster families developed in the previous year (2017) and aims to strengthen the multi-disciplinary and multisectoral delivery of services. Since UNICEF started supporting foster care in the country, ten years ago, the number of foster families significantly increased (from less 100 foster parents in 2007 to more than 2 300 foster parents at the end of 2018).

Regarding the right of every child to live free of violence and exploitation, the Child Advocacy Centers developed by UNICEF in Sofia, Shumen and Montana supported 160 children victims of violence and 148 parents. Advocacy efforts for ensuring sustainability of the services are reflected in the new Social Services Act submitted to Parliament in December. A comprehensive national study on violence against children was initiated in 2018 and will be completed in 2019, which will

inform the future implementation of the programme and all necessary changes in the legal and institutional framework.

The work related to the completion of the reform of the juvenile justice system in Bulgaria was renewed and the Draft Law on Diversion and Educational Measures was put through revision in the working group convened by the Ministry of Justice.

UNICEF together with UNHCR and other organisations continued the robust advocacy and the provision of technical support for the full implementation on the legal prohibition of the detention of unaccompanied and separated children (2017) with the adoption of amendments in secondary legislation.

In 2018 the office invested significantly in supporting knowledge and experience exchange on child care and child protection with other countries in the region and beyond and has hosted exchanges and study visits with Armenia, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan and Macedonia.

Strategic context of 2018

Children's issues have remained high on the national policy agenda and significant progress has been achieved in key areas, with support from UNICEF and other partners. Particular progress was made in deinstitutionalization of children, early childhood development (ECD), and preschool and school education. Benefiting from the positive political climate during the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU, UNICEF supported the country in sharing and speeding their experience and lessons learnt from the child care reform. A high-level forum "Family and Community Based Care for Children across Europe: Lessons Learned and Commitments for Action at National and EU level" was held in Brussels and led to the development of a Policy paper for the members states on the child care reforms.¹

The Government has preserved macroeconomic stability, while the country is striving to converge towards European Union standards in terms of socioeconomic development and social cohesion. According to the EU SILC study "Social Inclusion and Living Conditions ", almost half of the Bulgarian children (41.6 percent or 509.900) live at risk of poverty or social exclusion.² Children in situations of particular vulnerability and marginalization are those living in poor households, in families with more than three children or with a single parent, children who belong to Roma and Turkish ethnic groups, children who are out of school, children with disabilities, children from migrant and refugee families (especially unaccompanied and separated children), and children in residential care.

The child protection system in Bulgaria is defined by the Child Protection Act, adopted in 2000. The Act defines "Child Protection" as a system of legislative, administrative and other measures to guarantee realization and protection of child rights. The system consists of 147 child protection departments (CPDs) with less than 900 social workers who are engaged directly with cases of children at risk, including children victims of violence. The main challenges are lack of sufficient human resources (high workload, low motivation, "burn-out effect", staff turnover and attitudes for short-term stay in the profession); lack of a system for capacity development – no regular training, support or supervision; no uniform standards for social work with children and no monitoring mechanism in place. In 2018, UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have undertaken a child protection system analysis which is expected to be completed in 2019. The analysis is envisaged to support the Government in assessing the current situation, to identify the main challenges and suggest recommendations how they could be overcome.

In the recent decade, Bulgaria achieved an impressive progress in the child care system reform and more specifically in ensuring the child's right to live in a family environment. The number of children in institutions of the old type decreased from 7,587 in 2010 to 633 as of 1st January 2019.

¹ <https://www.unicef.bg/en/article/Prekratyavane-na-institutsionalizatsiyata-i-ukrepvane-na-grizhata-za-detsa-v-semeyna-sreda-i-v-obshtnostta-v-Evropa-i-izvan-neva/1325>

² <http://nsi.bg/en/content/8294/poverty-and-social-inclusion-indicators-national-level>

There are 4,825 children placed in extended families, 2,205 children placed in foster care and 3,075 children placed in small-scale residential care services.

Corporal punishment is prohibited under the Child Protection Act (2000), the Family Code (2009) and the Pre-school and School Education Act (2015). In February 2017, the Council of Ministers approved a National Program for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children for the period 2017 – 2020, however violence against children continues to be widespread in society both as a practice and a social norm.

The number of people convicted for violence is very low, and children in Bulgaria still cannot seek and get fair, timely and effective legal protection when their rights are violated. Administrative data on the number of children victims of violence is disjointed and contradictory: in 2018 the Child Protection Departments reported to have received only 1 106 signals for violence against children and opened only 387 cases³, the Prosecutors' Office reports the initiation of 1,160 criminal proceedings for crimes related to violence against children⁴ and the Ministry of Education and Science reports that over 80 percent of the 1969 schools in the country have submitted at least one child abuse report.

Due to its location at the outer borders of the EU, Bulgaria has evidenced a growing influx of asylum seekers since 2013. This was mostly due to the war in Syria and other conflicts and/or persecution of people in the Middle East and North Africa. The peak was reached in 2015, with 20,391⁵ applicants for international protection, after which numbers started to decrease, as asylum seekers were choosing alternative routes. In 2017 and 2018 (as of the end of November)⁶, 3,700 and 2,255 people, respectively, applied for international protection. Despite the currently low numbers of persons arriving on the Bulgarian territory, there are many vulnerable persons among them. Children account for more than 30 percent of all who have submitted applications for international protection in the period January – November 2018.

The top countries of origin are Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2016, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) accounted for 42 percent (2,772 UASC) of the asylum seekers and continued to be high in 2017 at 36% (440 UASC). In the first eleven months of 2018, 423 unaccompanied children – more than 50 percent of all asylum-seeking children - submitted applications for international protection. The government improved significantly the conditions for acceptance of applications, and the basic needs of asylum seekers in terms of accommodation, food, medical care, are satisfied.

Good practices have been identified in terms of interinstitutional cooperation and coordination in facilitating the access of asylum-seeking and refugee children to the Bulgarian education system as well as in terms of working to ensure that unaccompanied and separated children

³ Agency for Social Assistance Data

⁴ Annual report of the Prosecutor's Office

⁵ State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers

⁶ State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers

(UASC) are not detained. Following the adoption of the legal ban on detention of UASC from December 2017, there have been court decisions which provide breakthrough findings and rulings against this detention. In spite of the progress, some challenges remain as regards the protection of unaccompanied children and children separated from their families, owing to the insufficient capacity of the child protection system to assume its obligations – inadequate number and preparedness of staff, lack of practical experience of addressing the needs of migrant children, language and cultural barriers, lack of a procedure for regularizing these children's stay in Bulgaria, unavailability of social services.

Results in the Outcome Area

The key outcome and outputs for child protection in Bulgaria, based on the Results Framework for Bulgaria's Country Programme 2018-2022, and corresponding to goal areas outcomes and outputs of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2017-2021 are:

Outcome 1: *By 2022, boys and girls, especially the most disadvantaged, benefit from a nurturing family and social environment to attain a high standard of development, health, learning and well-being.*

Output 1.2. *The child and social protection systems are strengthened to provide consolidated interventions to ensure the right of every child to live in a caring and supportive family environment.*

Outcome 3: *By 2022, social services, the child protection system and the administration of justice more effectively prevent violence, protect child victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures, including in humanitarian situations.*

Output 3.1. *Targeted strategies to prevent violence against children are implemented by national institutions, and child victims receive holistic attention in child-sensitive services.*

Output 3.2. *Children's rights are respected by the juvenile justice system, and a wide range of alternative measures facilitate the education and social integration of children in conflict with the law.*

Output 3.3. *Boys and girls participants in legal proceedings benefit from improved capacity of police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers and from the establishment of child-sensitive procedures.*

The key outcomes and outputs from the Bulgaria country programme 2018 – 2022 contribute to UNICEF Strategic plan for the period 2018 – 2021 and its Results Framework, in particular Goal Area 3: Every Child is Protected from Violence: *Girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable and those affected by humanitarian situations, are protected from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and harmful practices.*

The relevant outputs to Goal Area 3 are as follows:

- a) Countries have strengthened child protection systems for prevention and response services to address violence against children;
- b) Countries have strengthened prevention and protection services to address harmful practices (FGM/C and child marriage); and
- c) Countries have improved systems to protect children that come in contact with the law and to treat them in accordance with international standards.

Results achieved in 2018 under CPD Output 1.2 The child and social protection systems are strengthened to provide consolidated interventions to ensure the right of every child to live in a caring and supportive family environment.

The country office continued providing support to the Government for the effective implementation of the undertaken deinstitutionalization reform and addressing the challenges related to lack of sufficient focus on prevention and early intervention, family support and quality of services. The Bulgarian Government, in their role as the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, in cooperation with the European Commission and with support from UNICEF, convened a high-level forum "Family and Community Based Care for Children across Europe: Lessons Learned and Commitments for Action at National and EU level" in Brussels. The aim of the event was to reflect on the successes, lessons learned and next steps to take by countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans in the move from institutional care to community-based care for children; and the role of government, civil society, development partners, and the European Union in shaping this transition over the years.

UNICEF also supported the development of the Social Services Act through active participation in the Government led-task force and working group. The Act is approved by the Council of Ministers and was submitted for approval by the Parliament in December 2018. The new legislation is introducing investment in the social service workforce, licensing and accreditation of diversified social services.

In September 2018, the country office jointly with the MLSP launched a comprehensive Analysis of the child protection system in country, aiming to examine efficiency of the system to protect children and respect their rights. The results and recommendations of the Analysis will be used to develop an action plan to further strengthen the capacity of the child protection system to identify children and families at risk and provide adequate and effective individualized support.

UNICEF supported the development of a comprehensive training programme for foster care commissions which builds upon the 2017 training programme for foster carers. It aims at strengthening the multi-disciplinary specialists' competences and capacity to ensure quality of foster care and is now used nationwide. In Oct 2018, UNICEF Bulgaria country office was awarded by the National Association of Foster Care for its systemic support for the service development and piloting the regional model for its provision which is now taken on by the Government as approach and philosophy in the service implementation at national level.

UNICEF Bulgaria provided technical assistance and policy advice for the implementation and monitoring of the up-dated Action Plan for De-institutionalization as well as supported the Government in the implementation of the communication campaign "Mission is possible" aimed at raising the public awareness and understanding about the reform, its accomplishments and the rights of children to grow up in a family environment.

The modelling of outreach family support services (Family Counselling Centres) continued in Shumen and Montana regions. The 5 Family Centers worked with 1,688 families promoting positive parenting practices and 2,334 children benefited from their services, receiving support

for accessing rights, including admission to kindergarten, access to health care and education. Based on the experience and good practices of the Family Centers, the Agency for Social Assistance up-dated the national guidelines for social services and incorporated the specific approach and programmes of the Family Centers for prevention of family separation and outreach support, which is a basis of the national scaling up plan. Additionally, the local authorities and civil society in Shumen district were supported by UNICEF to optimize the existing network of social and integrated services by generating evidence regarding the needs and services for children and families at risk from the most vulnerable communities and groups. Two important studies were finalized: A thematic analysis of the situation in Shumen district and A sociological survey "Students' Attitudes and Dreams for the Future - Education, Family, Work" conducted among the students from ethnic communities in the district. Results of the both studies are being used for advocacy with the national and local governments.

Results achieved in 2018 under CPD Output 3.1.

In 2018 UNICEF CO supported several significant legislative processes. Robust advocacy efforts and the provision of technical support to the State Agency for Child Protection led to the initiation of a revision of the Mechanism for coordination on cases of violence against children and crisis intervention. The work on amending the coordination mechanism and adopting it as a secondary legislation will continue in 2019. The CO also completed an in-depth analysis of the national legislation related to violence against children (Analysis and assessment of the national legislation with respect to the prevention, identification, reporting and response to violence against children⁷). The report was used for advocacy purposes to place the issue of violence against children on the national agenda. The discussion was organized jointly the National Ombudsperson and the participation of governmental partners and civil society organizations.

The modelling of integrated services for children victims and witnesses of violence and crime continued in 3 regions – Sofia, Shumen and Montana. As a result, 245 children and 205 parents benefitted from the integrated services for psycho-social support, medical assistance, legal aid and child-sensitive forensic interviewing provided by the Child Advocacy Centres. The plan for scaling up and ensuring sustainability of the services are reflected in the new Social Services Act submitted to Parliament in December.

In Nov 2018, the country office has also undertaken a campaign on ending violence at school **“Together against violence in schools”**⁸ used external communication (strategic media partnerships) in combination of a mix of C4D-led tools and forums (**Youth Talks**⁹ and **World’s Largest Lesson**¹⁰ and innovations (Virtual Reality Room¹¹) to spark solidarity and engage children as agents for change.

⁷ https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/sites/unicef.org/bulgaria/files/2018-07/Legal_Analysis_BG_resume.pdf

⁸ UNICEF Bulgaria’s intervention planned for 2019: <https://uni.cf/2zVU9o2>

⁹ UNICEF and MES launch campaign – focus on Youth Talks: <https://uni.cf/2rz29Xy>

¹⁰ First Open Lesson for Safe Learning Environment: <https://uni.cf/2RV8UyL>

¹¹ More on UNICEF Bulgaria’s VR innovation for ending violence at school: <https://uni.cf/2C9BZRB>

Results achieved in 2018 under CPD Output 3.2

The juvenile justice reform in Bulgaria is still ongoing. In 2018, despite the joint efforts of UNICEF and partners from the civil society, the completion of the process of juvenile justice reform through the adoption of the draft Act on Diversion from Criminal Proceedings and Implementation of Educational Measures was delayed once again due to the lack of political will. Children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility and children who have committed status offences continue to be subject to correctional and penalizing measures. At the same time, despite the bottlenecks in the process of reform, the policy advice and efforts towards strengthening the capacity of professionals to uphold child rights have resulted in a considerable drop in the number of children placed in correctional boarding schools from 183 children in 2016 to 111 children placed in these closed facilities as of Dec 2018.

UNICEF and the BHC advocacy and technical support during the year resulted in amendments to the Regulations of the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) that introduces provisions for referral to Child Protection Departments, representation, possibility of implementation of police protection, interpretation and legal aid for unaccompanied children in national immigration procedures as well as for best interest assessment and determination during these procedures. The new regulations build on the ban on detention of UASC, which was introduced into the Law on the Ministry of the Interior in December 2017, owing to the strong advocacy efforts of UNICEF, UNHCR, BHC and other partners and created stronger guarantees for the implementation and protection of the rights of unaccompanied children. However, despite the legal ban on detention of unaccompanied children, cases still occur when children are attached to unrelated adults or they are identified automatically as adults, thus making their legal representation for appealing the detention crucial. The provision of legal representation to 18 unaccompanied children in detention in 2018 continued to build a steady jurisprudence in the Administrative Courts in the country with judges consistently ruling all cases of detention in contradiction with the law, the basic standards for child care and protection, thus unlawful.

Despite initial positive signs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Bulgaria would support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Government eventually withdrew from the Pact. UNICEF established contact with state partners to express concerns about the Government's decision and request assurance that it will not have a negative impact on migration policies and practices on children, including with respect to the need for child-sensitive procedures, basic services provision, family unity, better data and transnational cooperation to protect the most vulnerable. UNICEF will continue to support the state institutions in establishing and effectively implementing the needed safeguards to uphold the best interest of the child in migration proceedings.

Results achieved in 2018 under CPD Output 3.3

Building on the analysis and recommendations of the 2016 Country Analytical Report on data on VAC and Access to Justice and the process of revision of the Trans Monee database, in 2018 UNICEF put a strong focus on the availability and quality of administrative and survey data in the

Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria and the National Study on VAC launched in 2018 and in the process of drafting the new Strategy for the Child 2019-2030.

In 2018 the Ministry of Interior launched an informational data base on children in conflict with the law and children victims of violence which will provide disaggregated data (gender, age, family situation, educational status, disability of children victims, type of violence, previous incidents, protection measures, legal proceedings, etc.). UNICEF provided technical assistance in the process of development of the system, consulting the indicators and supported the training of police officers responsible to process the data.

UNICEF supported the specialization of professionals dealing with cases involving children participants in legal proceedings through advocacy for amendments in the Judiciary Act, provision of technical support to the pilot specialized panels, training of professionals and through advocacy for scaling-up the specialized judges/panels and units for children supported by UNICEF to all Courts and Prosecutors' Offices. In 2018, 1982 children benefitted from the strengthened capacity and child-sensitive proceedings implemented by the specialized units/panels in the 6 Prosecutor's Offices and 7 Courts trained by UNICEF and the Ministry of Justice that continue to implement the Guidelines on Specialized Units Dealing with Cases Involving Children.

Renewal of the MoU with the National Institute for Justice – the training institute for all magistrates in Bulgaria for the duration of the CP 2018-2022 ensured sustainability of the process of strengthening the capacity of judges and prosecutors. In October, the partnership with the National Institute for Justice resulted in the organisation of a training for 68 civil judges from 13 courts from the Varna Court Region of Appeal (1 Court of Appeal, 2 District Courts and 10 Regional Courts) who are currently presiding over 150 proceedings with 174 children participants, involving domestic violence, parental rights, parental disputes and child protection measures related to placement in alternative care.

During the year more than 200 police officers, prosecutors and judges participated in trainings focused on the rights of children participants in legal proceedings, violence against children, gender-based violence, child-sensitive hearing forensic interviewing.

The sustainability of all efforts towards strengthening the capacity of police and justice professionals will be guaranteed by the development and implementation of regular training programmes in the Police Academy and the NIJ which are planned to become part of the curricula in the academic 2019/2020 year.

In 2018 UNICEF continued advocating and supporting the introduction of mechanisms for provision of specialized free legal aid to children through building partnerships with Bar Associations and strengthening the cooperation with the National Legal Aid Bureau and the Supreme Lawyer's council. More than 474 children benefitted from legal aid – consultation and representation by UNICEF trained and supported lawyers and in the framework of the partnership with the BHC, including 225 unaccompanied children, 170 children participants in civil and administrative procedures and 79 children victims of violence.

Knowledge and experience exchange on child care, child protection and access to justice

In 2018 the office invested considerable time and resources to support knowledge and experience exchange on child care and child protection with other countries in ECARO and LACRO. These included a deployment of the Child Protection Specialist to UNICEF Peru to share lessons learned from the reform of the child protection system in Bulgaria and exchanges and study visits for delegations from Macedonia, Morocco and Kyrgyzstan. The bilateral cooperation between Bulgaria and Armenia in child care, facilitated by UNICEF, was further expanded. UNICEF with the support of the Government of Bulgaria and in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Armenia organized the International Conference “Keeping Families Together” in Yerevan, Armenia, 4-5 September 2018. The high-level event focused on reinforcement of the commitments set by Governments of Bulgaria and Armenia to advance equity in fulfilment of children’s right to live in a nurturing family environment and the access of children to community-based family support and alternative care services in line with the priorities set for the Sustainable Development Goal #10 on Reduced Inequalities. In Feb 2019 the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria approved a draft agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNICEF Armenia for the provision of \$ 125,000 to a project "Support for Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Armenia" which is envisaged to continue the collaboration between the two countries and the exchange of experience and good practices.

Results Assessment Framework for Child Protection thematic work in 2018

Programme Components and Outcomes (2018-2022)	Key Performance indicators (for each indicator: baseline and target for 2022)																	
	Indicator(s) <i>SMART indicators will enable direct measurement of outcome</i>	Baseline Value	Target Value															
Programme Component 1 - Early childhood development and child care																		
Outcome 1: By 2022, boys and girls, especially the most disadvantaged, benefit from a nurturing family and social environment to attain a high standard of development, health, learning and well-being.	Proportion of disadvantaged families with children 0–2 years of age who received targeted counselling and support for promoting early childhood development (ECD)	1% (2016)	At least 30% (2022) Status as of 28 th of February 2019: 1%															
	# of children (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, refugee and migrant children) entering formal care every year	10,925 children in formal care (2017) 2,179 children entering formal care (2016)	10% reduction Status as of 31 st of December 2018: 10,738 children in formal care 1,974 entering institutional, residential and foster care (2018) Source: Agency for Social Assistance															
Output 1.2: The child and social protection systems are strengthened to provide consolidated interventions to ensure the right of every child to live in a caring and supportive family environment.	An alternative care policy in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children is implemented in the country	National DI Strategy and Action Plan available	Legal amendments in line with the planned measures in the DI Action Plan Status as of 7 th March 2019: a completely new Social Services Act is adopted by the National Assembly															
	Social welfare workforce strengthened and connected to social protection system (case management, referral capacity development)	800 social workers in statutory child protection departments; Case management procedures existing, but not followed properly	At least 10% increase of number of social workers in child protection department. A system in place for continuous training and development of social workers 2018 AMP Target: An assessment of the capacity of the Child Protection System initiated Status as of 7 th March 2019: on-track															
Programme Component 3 - Prevention of violence, protection of victims and access to justice for all children																		
Outcome 3: By 2022, social services, the child protection system and the administration of justice more effectively prevent violence, protect child victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures, including in humanitarian situations.	# of cases of violence against children identified, reported and addressed	3,741 signals in the Child Protection Departments, 1,839 cases in the Child Protection Departments (2015)	At least 4,677 signals and at least 2,299 cases (2022) Up-date as of 31 st Dec 2018: 1106 signals out of which the opened cases are 387. There's a significant reduction for the last 4 years: <table><tr><td></td><td>2015</td><td>2016</td><td>2017</td><td>2018</td></tr><tr><td>Signals</td><td>3741</td><td>3158</td><td>1282</td><td>1106</td></tr><tr><td>Cases</td><td>957</td><td>681</td><td>382</td><td>387</td></tr></table>		2015	2016	2017	2018	Signals	3741	3158	1282	1106	Cases	957	681	382	387
	2015	2016	2017	2018														
Signals	3741	3158	1282	1106														
Cases	957	681	382	387														

			Source: the ASA
	Institutionalized, specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings exists for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers working with children in justice processes	None (2017)	Specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings is institutionalized for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers in their respective training institutions Status as of 31.12.2018 Specialized training included in the Draft Diversion Act, the Annual Programme for Prevention and Protection of Violence and the draft National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030
	Justice system complies with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice	Partially complies (2016)	Fully complies Status as of 31.12.2018 Draft Diversion Act bringing the justice system in compliance with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice under revision by the working group in the Ministry of Justice
Output 3.1: Targeted strategies to prevent violence against children are implemented by national institutions, and child victims receive holistic attention in child- sensitive services.	Country routinely collects and publishes key types of administrative data on violence, exploitation and abuse of children, disaggregated by age and sex.	Partially	Fully 2018 AMP Target: National Study on VAC completed. Up-date: Delayed. The study is envisaged to be completed by May 2019.
	# of safe and accessible mechanisms for children to report violence	1	At least 3 Up-date: 1, the national telephone line for children 116 111
	Share of parents who do not accept corporal punishment as a discipline method as a result of target C4D initiatives	68% of parents accept corporal punishment (2012)	Less than 45% of parents accept corporal punishment Up-date: 66 % of parents have used corporal punishment at least once but only 38 % use it systematically. 88 % of parents realise that corporal punishment is not effective. Source: nationally representative study, commissioned by NNC and carried out by Noema, Oct 2018
Output 3.2: Children's rights are respected by the juvenile justice system, and a wide range of alternative measures facilitate the education and	Existence of procedures and services for children in contact with law that are applied and delivered in line with international norms	Some services and procedures exist but they are not fully developed, applied	Procedures for diversion in compliance with international norms are implemented

social integration of children in conflict with the law.		and delivered in line with international norms	2018 AMP Target: Preliminary Impact Assessment of the draft Act on Diversion and Implementation of Educational Measures is completed Status: Completed.
	Number of children placed in correctional boarding schools	183 (2017)	0 2018 Annual Target: 160 Status as of 31.12.2018 Number of children placed in correctional boarding schools is 111 (data provided by the Ministry of Education and Science)
	Number of unaccompanied migrant and asylum seeking children in detention	189	Status as of 31.12.2018 163
Output 3.3: Boy and girl participants in legal proceedings benefit from improved capacity of police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers and from the establishment of child-sensitive procedures.	Specialized legal aid is available to children participants in legal proceedings	Specialized legal aid is available on projects basis	All children participants in legal proceedings have access to specialized legal aid 2018 AMP Target: Assessment of children's access to free quality specialized legal aid is completed and presented. Status as of 31.12.2018 Assessment postponed for Q2 of 2019 according to agreement with the National Legal Aid
	Data on the number of children participating in justice processes (criminal, civil, administrative), and the reasons for their participation is: a. Integrated into existing data collection and management mechanisms b. Disaggregated by age and gender c. Regularly collected d. Publicized	Partially	Fully Status as of 31.12.2018 Data is partially integrated and disaggregated; Data is regularly collected and publicized by the Prosecutor's Office and the ministry of Interior

Financial Analysis

Table 1: 2018 Planned budget by Thematic Sector

Thematic Sector 5: Child Protection, Bulgaria

Planned and Funded for the Country Programme 2018 (in USD)

Intermediate Results	Funding Type ¹	Planned Budget ²
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	RR	90,500
	ORR	172,500
23-03 Access to justice	RR	143,780
	ORR	876,723
Total Budget		1,283,503

¹ RR: Regular Resources, ORR: Other Resources - Regular (add ORE: Other Resources - Emergency, if applicable)

² Planned budget for ORR (and ORE, if applicable) does not include estimated recovery cost (only programmable amounts).

Table 2: Country-level Thematic contributions to thematic pool received in 2018

Thematic Pool 5: Child Protection

Thematic Contributions Received for Thematic Pool 5 by UNICEF Bulgaria in 2018

No Country-level Thematic contributions to thematic pool were received in 2018 by Bulgaria CO. The reported funds are received in previous years (specifically grant SC1499060136 for Bulgaria).

Table 3: Expenditures in the Thematic Sector

Thematic Sector 5: Child Protection, Bulgaria

2018 Expenditures by Key-Results Areas (in US Dollars)

Organizational Targets	Expenditure Amount*			
	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	All Programme Accounts
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	248,915	329,620	141,970	720,505
23-03 Access to justice	85,422	263,732	234,129	583,284
Total	334,337	593,353	376,100	1,303,789

*Note: this report was pulled in March 2019 and the totals in this table may not match reports pulled later.

Table 4: Thematic expenses by Results Area

Organizational Targets	Expenditure Amount*			
	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	All Programme Accounts
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	477	74,124		74,601
23-03 Access to justice	3,181	26,769		29,951
Total	3,658	100,893		104,552

*Note: this report was pulled in March 2019 and the totals in this table may not match reports pulled later.

Table 5: Expenses by Specific Intervention Codes

Specific intervention codes	Total Utilized (US\$)
23-01-01 Legal and policy framework related to violence, exploitation and abuse	33,212
23-01-02 Services to prevent or respond to violence, exploitation and abuse	346,781
23-01-19 Violence, exploitation, and abuse - surveys (e.g. KAP, VACS), data analysis/research/evaluation evidence generation, synthesis, and use	1,655
23-01-20 Protective services for children on the move	785
23-01-22 Inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration on violence, exploitation and abuse	5,781
23-01-23 Child Protection humanitarian AoR/humanitarian sector coordination	167,085
23-01-99 Technical assistance - Prevention and response services for violence against children	85,652
23-03-01 Promoting diversion and alternatives to deprivation of liberty	32,773
23-03-02 Justice sector workforce strengthening and capacity building (including police)	19,948
23-03-03 Access to child-friendly police and justice sector services	27,420
23-03-05 Alternative care reform and service provision	265,628
23-03-06 Justice, birth registration/CRVS, and alternative care - surveys (e.g. KAP, VACS), data analysis/research/evaluation evidence generation, synthesis, and use	47,453
23-03-99 Technical assistance - Access to justice	88,415
26-02-04 Stimulating demand for and capacity to use data	8,412
26-06-04 Leading advocate	67,426
26-06-05 Leading voice	63,243
26-06-07 Leading brand	5,958
26-07-01 Operations support to programme delivery	28,345
28-07-04 Management and Operations support at CO	7,818
Total	1,303,789

Table 6: Planned budget for 2019
Thematic Sector 5: Child Protection, Bulgaria
Planned Budget and Available Resources for 2019 (in USD)

Intermediate Results	Funding Type¹	Planned Budget²	Funded Budget ¹	Shortfall ²
23-01 Prevention and response services for violence against children	RR	90,000	67,578.19	22,421.81
	ORR	167,500	367,678.85	-200,178.85
	ORE	146,035	146,034.81	0.00
23-03 Access to justice	RR	143,773	181,743.29	-37,970.29
	ORR	881,596	486,876.79	394,719.21
Total Budget		1,428,904	1,249,912	178,992

¹ Planned and Funded budget for ORR (and ORE, if applicable) excludes recovery cost. RR plan is based on total RR approved for the Country Programme duration.

² Other Resources shortfall represents ORR funding required for the achievements of results in 2019.

Future Work Plan

2018 was the first year of the new country programme spanning the period 2018 to 2022. Building on the results from the past cooperation, the overarching goal of the programme 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.

The country partnership will continue to support childcare and juvenile justice reforms and the continuation of the process of deinstitutionalization, through strengthening the child and social protections systems and the justice and law-enforcement systems to progressively realize the rights of all children.

In 2019 UNICEF will focus on building the evidence for the development and implementation of intersectoral policies and interventions to strengthen the child protection system's capacity to identify, prevent and respond to risks for children and the drivers of separation, including violence, and to provide integrated case management and family support through the National Study on Violence against Children and the Analysis of the Child Protection System.

Building on the evidence and recommendations of the two studies UNICEF will support the development and adoption of key strategic documents and legislation, including the new National Strategy for the Child (2019-2030), the new Social Services Act and draft Diversion and Educational Measures Act.

The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices will be a CO priority for 2019 streamlining programme, fundraising and communication initiatives to achieve stronger impact. UNICEF will continue to work with the Government and other stakeholders such as WHO, local authorities and civil society sector to

strengthen national capacities to prevent, identify, respond to and address violence against children.

The modelling of integrated services for psycho-social support, medical assistance and legal aid for children victims and witnesses of violence and crime will continue in 2019. To ensure that the model can be replicated and rolled-out nationally, UNICEF will initiate costing and evaluation of the model services.

Children's access to justice will be enhanced through the development and implementation of child-sensitive hearing procedures and strengthening the capacity and specialization of justice and law-enforcement professionals. The main goals for 2019-2020 will be the institutionalization of training programmes for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers in their respective training institutions and the development of cross-sectoral standards and rules for the use of the specialized facilities for child-friendly hearing (Blue rooms) in the country.

In juvenile justice, UNICEF will continue to provide technical assistance for the revision of the draft Diversion and Educational Measures Act and support the overall process of reform by assisting the development of procedures for the administration of justice for children in conflict with the law, drafting secondary legislation, creating training packages for the relevant professionals, designing diversion mechanisms and alternative measures.

Technical assistance and policy advice will be provided to the National Legal Aid Bureau and Bar Associations across the country to develop accessible mechanisms for the provision of specialized free legal aid to children. Refugee and migrant children will continue to benefit from legal aid and strategic litigation will be implemented in cases of unlawful detention of unaccompanied migrant children.

Expression of Thanks

UNICEF Bulgaria would like to express its sincere appreciation to all donors who have provided contribution to the thematic funds for Outcome Area 6 "Child Protection". Without this contribution, UNICEF Bulgaria would not have been able to achieve the major milestones and longer-term sustainable gains that have improved the wellbeing of children throughout the country and especially in the most marginalized communities. Important advances have been made in the legal and institutional framework of the child protection system in Bulgaria, the efforts for advancing children's equitable access to justice were accelerated and the issues affecting children have been a priority on the national policy agenda.

Annex1: Human Interest Stories

Stolen childhood: Detention and conflict with the law

Behind every child in conflict with the law stands a long list of adults who failed in their responsibilities



UNICEF Bulgaria/2013

Iliya is only 14 years old and already well acquainted with the meaning of the words. They are a part of his life as he falls under the “children in conflict with the law” category. His story begins a year ago on the paved road of the “dusty” juvenile justice system.

In an attempt to protect his sister from their drunk father, during yet another family fight, Iliya pulls out a knife. His sole intention is to “scare him off” (as their mother would often do) so he would retreat to bed. Without meaning it, Iliya stabs his father. The doctors conclude the wound is not fatal and after a few hours in the emergency room, the father is stabilized.

His sudden death the day after comes out of the blue.



UNICEF Bulgaria/2016

Iliya is taken into custody and held in detention where he spends three months -- away from his family and without any opportunity to attend school. Experts believe the child cannot be held criminally responsible, as he was unaware of his actions and their consequences; simply wanted to protect his sister. Therefore the prosecutor terminates criminal proceedings but refers the case to the [local Commission for Combating Antisocial Behaviour by Minors and Adolescents](#), as per law.

The rusty wheel of the still archaic law for combating antisocial behaviour starts turning and the local commission chooses the most severe measure — placement in a correctional boarding school.



UNICEF Bulgaria/2016

Youth, fear and inability to process what has happened are not taken into consideration, neither are the opinions of experts. Nor is the fact that the boy used a knife for protection, and not as a weapon. In the system's whirlpool, Iliya's right to a fair and child-sensitive process is crushed – which is usual for vulnerable children who cannot afford a lawyer.

Although this is his first offence, Iliya automatically receives the harshest punishment.

The rule in similar cases is to implement other measures first and to move onto harsher punishment only when those fail. **The regional court accepts the Commission's demand to place him in a correctional boarding school in effect, depriving him of his liberty.**



UNICEF Bulgaria/2016

However, after UNICEF-supported services for children and families provide him with legal aid, Iliya gets the chance to go back to his family. An emotional and psychological state assessment is carried out to prove that he does not pose a threat to himself or others. **In this way, the verdict is appealed in the District Court and finally revoked.**

Today Iliya is at home with his relatives and attends school regularly. His life is starting to return to its normal pace. They say that right is the art of goodness and equality

This is what every child deserves.

****This story is based on a real case but names and photos used here are neither related to real people, nor the situation mentioned above.***

Juvenile justice in Bulgaria has been undergoing reform for more than a decade. This has a direct reflection on the fates of several thousand children. And children should be in the focus of the reform, because every child has the right to a second chance. Behind every child that ended up in conflict with the law there is a long list of adults who failed in their responsibilities.

One of these children is Iliya, who, thanks to the help of UNICEF, had a chance to reunite with his family.

Annex 2: Donor Report Feedback Form:

English version