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**“Social Welfare and Child Care System Reform: Enhancing
Social Inclusion” Project (IPA 2010)”**

Component “Child Care System Reform” Final Evaluation Report

7 July 2014



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The contents of this evaluation report is the sole responsibility of the contractor and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of UNICEF or the European Commission.



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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
COCSEN	Commission for Orientation of Children with Special Educational Needs
CPT	Committee for Prevention of Torture
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Centre for Social Work
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
DCC	Day Care Centre
DoA	Description of Action
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	EU Delegation
EUR	EU currency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IDP	Internally-Displaced People
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
LPA	Local Plan of Action (for Children)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MONSTAT	Montenegro Statistical Office
MO	<i>(abbreviation in Montenegrin for)</i> Material Support
MoRES	Monitoring Results for Equity System
NA	Not Applicable
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NYHQ	New York Headquarters
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights



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OPCAT	Optional Protocol under the Convention Against Torture
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PSC	Project Steering Committee
ROM	Results-Oriented Monitoring
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SGH	Small Group Home
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document represents the Final Evaluation Report of the Project “Child Care System Reform”. The Project is part of the “Social Welfare and Child Care System Reform: Enhancing Social Inclusion” IPA 2010 (component 3).

Project description

The **purpose** of the Project is to enhance access to comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable family and community-based services as alternative to institutionalization of vulnerable children. It planned to achieve four **outcomes**: 1) The Child Protection System has a policy and legal framework harmonized with international standards and the Institute for Social Welfare is established to standardize and ensure quality child care services; 2) Capacities of organizations and individuals working in child protection system are enhanced; 3) Availability and access to alternative family and community-based services for vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities increased; 4) Behaviour change towards social inclusion enabled - focus vulnerable children. Project **activities** included support for the modernization of the legal and institutional framework in social and child protection; capacity building for professionals involved in social welfare, health and education sectors; introduction of child protection databases in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) and Centres of Social Work (CSW); support for the design and promotion of Local Plans of Action for Children; assessment and preparatory work for the closure of the institution ‘Komanski Most’ for children; development of the Plan of transformation of Children’s Home ‘Mladost’ into a resource centre; media campaign. The **target groups** of the Project are social welfare, education and health sectors; policy makers; and civil society. The **final beneficiaries** of the Project are vulnerable and excluded children and families. The total **budget** of the Project is 1,374,560 EUR, of which the EU provided €1,249,600 while UNICEF contributed with complementary funds amounting to €124,960. The **implementation** period of the Project began in January 2011 and lasted until July 2014. The project was implemented by the MoLSW in partnership with UNICEF Montenegro and other partners.

Context of the Project

Montenegro is an EU candidate country. The EU accession process drives the policy agenda of the country. Observance of human rights represents an important part of the enlargement policy for Montenegro in accordance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The country is facing serious economic difficulties. Families with children have been disproportionately hit by the economic crisis. Children are more exposed to poverty than adults. Every 10th child in Montenegro lives in poverty (14,500 children¹). It is estimated that there are 18,000 children² with development disabilities. Physical access barriers, social rejection, insufficient social care and public prejudices are among the most significant challenges for their social inclusion. The Government undertook important measures to improve the situation, most notably through promotion of inclusive education, the behaviour change campaign “It’s about Ability” (2010-2013), reform of the social welfare and child protection sector since 2011 and development over the last three years of day care services. In 2010, Montenegro had 367 children residing in institutions. The rate of institutionalization of children per capita was among the highest in Europe. With the reform of social care system and adoption of new legislation, the number of children in institutions significantly dropped to 236 in 2013. The total number of fostered children was slowly rising in the last years, reaching 348 children in 2013. Fostering mainly exists in the form of kinship care while non-kinship fostering is in its early stage of development.

The child protection system relied heavily on institutional care and on financial benefits according to the Law in 2005. The social and child protection reform was defined until recently by the Strategy for the Social and Child Welfare Development 2008-2012. The new law adopted in 2013 is broadly in line with the UNCRC and other relevant human rights standards. The country has a new Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System and a new National Action Plan for Children, both covering the period 2013-2017. The social protection system is established centrally, through the MoLSW. The welfare network comprises CSWs, social institutions (children’s home, homes for the elderly, etc.) and Day Care Centres (DCCs) for children with disability. The sector was weakened by

¹ UNICEF (2012), “Child Poverty in Montenegro”, Podgorica

² Government of Montenegro (2008), “Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disability in Montenegro for the period 2008-2016”, p.27



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the insufficient number of qualified professional staff and over-emphasis on administrative tasks. The range of social services was not sufficiently well developed either. The capacity building programmes carried out over the last years significantly improved the capacity of CSWs to deliver better services in a more coherent manner, based on improved cooperation with other services, families in need and NGOs, and with the support of a better data monitoring system. The system of quality assurance in the social and child protection system is in development phase. Montenegro ratified the UNCRC, CEDAW and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is supported in its efforts to address child rights issues by international partners, notably UNICEF and EU.

Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to evaluate the final results and achievements of “Child Care System Reform” (component 3) of the Social Inclusion Project. The specific objectives are to provide feedback to UNICEF Montenegro and its national counterparts on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Project approach in strengthening the capacities of the Child Care System in implementing the reform for the benefit of the most vulnerable and excluded children and families; extract general lessons learnt and recommendations aimed at further enhancement of the Child Care system reform; provide the EUD with information on impact of their specific support to the reform of the system. The evaluation covers the entire implementation period January 2011 – July 2014 and the whole country, following the way the Project has been conceptualized in the Description of Action (DoA), preparatory documents and Theory of Change (ToC). The evaluation was carried out by Promeso Consulting (Romania), selected through competitive tender.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was carried out in three phases. In the **Inception/Desk Phase**, the team reviewed the project documentation and all relevant literature and reference documents. Following the evaluability check, several primary data collection methods and evaluation tools were developed. The **Field Phase** was devoted to the collection of data from key stakeholders at national and local levels via semi-structured interviews, focus groups, discussion groups and site visits to a representative sample of municipalities. In the **Synthesis Phase**, the team applied the standard evaluation criteria analysis (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability) in combination with Human Rights-Based Approach and Results-Based Management in order to assess the achievement of planned results, draw informed conclusions, identify lessons learnt and provide recommendations.

Main Findings and Conclusions

The Project is **highly relevant** for Montenegro’s child care reform and national policies for improving the well-being of children and realisation of children’s rights as it addressed the top priorities of the reform. The Project is in line with country’s Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System and the Plan of Action for Children while its primary objectives are tied to the implementation of the recently adopted Law on Social and Child Protection. It is highly relevant for Montenegro’s international commitments deriving from the ratification of the UNCRC, CEDAW, OPCAT and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its status of EU candidate country, and aligned with EU and UNICEF country priorities. The Project addressed the most pressing needs for child deinstitutionalisation and prevention of child abandonment through inter-sectoral cooperation, as identified in the domestic and international reports and planning documents. It remained relevant in time, as documented by reports, policy documents and strategies adopted or under implementation during its lifetime. The multi-pronged approach (including working on policies and legislation, developing methodologies and tools, capacity building, investment in social infrastructure) and highly-participatory approaches used in the implementation of the Project were appropriate in view of the underlying ToC and its key assumptions.

The Project was **effective** in achieving most of its planned results. MoLSW’s partnership with UNICEF, line ministries, professionals and NGOs allowed for effective and coordinated development and modernisation of policy and legal framework. The Project introduced a clear focus on the child rights and equity in the policy agenda and thus contributed to the acceleration of efforts to address outstanding CRC observations. Capacities of professionals working in child protection were improved. Access of vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities to alternative family and community-based services was increased, while work practices and approach of children’s



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needs in 'Komanski Most' Institute and Children's Home 'Mladost' were modernised. The Project contributed to behaviour change towards family-based solutions and speeded up the pace of reform by pushing the development of quality standards, professionalization of staff and development of alternatives to child institutionalisation. The major factors which increased the Project effectiveness are the EU accession process which drives the policy agenda in the country, a reform-oriented new leadership of the MoLSW and high level expertise of UNICEF. Limited capacity building provided to the managerial levels of reform, small, understaffed social and child protection and legal departments within the MoLSW, insufficient public tolerance and understanding of the issues related to children with disability, economic crisis and elections hampered the achievement of some planned results i.e. adoption of full set of by-laws deriving from the new law, setting up of the Institute for Social and Child Protection aimed to ensure professional development and quality assurance in the social and child welfare system, establishment of SGHs.

The Project has been implemented with **various degrees of efficiency**. It aimed to put the building blocks of a complex reform in the child protection system and to assist the Government in its first years of implementation. From this perspective, the goal of the Project was too ambitious for the set timeframe, available resources and the particular context of Montenegro. The late adoption of the Law on Social and Child Protection delayed, in chain, many other Project activities. At the same time, the strategy used by the Project to ensure full involvement of the Government and local stakeholders at every stage of the process meant that the original timeframe for some activities was overambitious and required rescheduling. Despite these delays, the output performance is in line with the intervention logic, outputs are of good quality and accessible to relevant stakeholders, and the overall results of the Project are significant. The Project had an outstanding efficiency feature as it invested in the prevention of child institutionalisation, which is the most expensive form of alternative care with dramatic negative consequences upon the normal development of a child. Project management was conducted professionally, with high quality and commitment from UNICEF, results orientation, rigorous monitoring and excellent quality of reporting of progress against set targets.

The project had a **good impact** level, making a major contribution to increasing the number of vulnerable children benefiting from family and community-based services. The findings indicate a spectacular reduction (98.2%) of children under the age of three in the Children's Home 'Mladost', the largest residential care institution in the country as well as more than two times increase in the number of children in non-kinship care, due to the change in public awareness and attitudes regarding family-based alternatives for children without parental care. The Project had thus a beneficial contribution to the progressive realisation of children's right to grow up in a family environment. As a result of new day care services established by the Project, the number of children with disabilities benefitting of this service more than doubled. The beneficiary families reported significant improvements in the quality of life for their children and family members as a result of service establishment. Deinstitutionalisation of children from 'Komanski Most' Institute was partially achieved due to factors which were mostly outside the control of the Project. Impact would have been higher in case the SGHs were ready in time for taking over the children from 'Komanski Most', there was a stronger push of the MoLSW for deinstitutionalisation, the organisation of DCCs allowed more tailored approaches towards the special needs of each child (age, type of disability) and individual care plans of institutionalised children were done with full participation of parents and children themselves, to the extent possible.

Most effects and outcomes of the Project are **likely sustainable**, given modernized policy and legislative framework, which provides the ground for sustainable and coordinated service provision for the most vulnerable and excluded children and their families. The Project was embedded in a longer term process of change for developing a sustainable rights-based child protection system. Newly-adopted standards, guidebooks, manuals and protocols are already in use or could easily be used for future establishment of similar services. New knowledge and skills on family counselling and fostering are integrated into the regular activities of professionals working with vulnerable children. Still, the CSWs have not achieved the required level of capacity and case management - crucial for gatekeeping – is in its first phase of implementation. Quality assurance, accreditation of training programmes, licensing of professionals and sustainable professional development are dependant on the setting up of the foreseen Institute for Social and Child Protection. Transformation of residential care institutions into resource centres is in the planning phase. The child protection database introduced by the Project provides sustainable ground for strengthened monitoring and reporting, but integration into the upcoming Social Card is unclear. The reform benefits of MoLSW commitment and overall ownership of national stakeholders, facilitated by strategic inter-sectoral partnerships. Although



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the Government allocated own funding for institutional building and development of services, continuation of reform is dependent upon external funding until capacities are in place to ensure laws and systems run effectively.

The Project had a major contribution to the promotion and realisation of **child rights** by ensuring a high profile of human rights standards in the revised legal framework and policy documents. It also expanded access to family and community-based services of the most vulnerable children and had a positive contribution to the strengthening of the capacity of a wide range of Montenegrin duty-bearers to protect and fulfil the children's rights to grow in a family environment. However, there was insufficient focus on equipping the weakest parents with the knowledge and abilities to claim and fully exercise their rights. The Project managed to ensure an **equity focus** by orienting EU and domestic investment towards the most vulnerable children and their families through equity-focused methodologies and programming approaches. The Project has contributed to the promotion of **gender equality** given the female-dominated social and child sector, rather than as a result of a gender-sensitive strategy. Gender disaggregation of data in project documents would have allowed a more in-depth analysis of Project achievements on gender equality. Overall, the design of the Project was **ethical** and benefits for children and parents, as rights holders, are already visible. More benefits will materialise once the new law and quality standards are fully implemented.

Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

Strategic Recommendations (S):

S1: Further develop the capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to better lead, plan, implement and monitor the process of social and child protection reforms

(Addressed to: MoLSW, with the assistance of UNICEF, UNDP and EU)

S2: Strengthen the managerial capacity of Centres for Social Work in order to support successful implementation of reforms at local level

(Addressed to: MoLSW, training providers, with the assistance of UNICEF, UNDP and EU)

S3: Accelerate the development of a strong cadre of social workers and a culture of lifelong learning within the Centres for Social Work to ensure that they keep pace with reforms and are empowered to address the needs of beneficiaries at high professional standards

(Addressed to: MoLSW, via the Institute for Social and Child Protection, in partnership with MoE, faculties of social work, and assisted by UNICEF)

S4: Further invest in the development and diversification of country-wide family and community-based social services to contribute to the social inclusion of the most vulnerable children and prevent unnecessary family separation

(Addressed to: MoLSW in partnership with MoE and MoH, local self-governments and CSOs, with the support of EU, UNICEF and other international partners)

S5: Prioritise the development of an efficient quality assurance system in the social and child protection system on the basis of transparent accreditation and licensing procedures

(Addressed to: MoLSW, Institute for Social and Child Protection, Social Inspection, with the support of EU, UNICEF and UNDP)

S6: Support the development of more evidence-based policies in the child protection system to inform efficient planning of resources and adjustment of policies to needs

(Addressed to: MoLSW, in collaboration with schools, NGOs, judiciary, penitentiaries, UNICEF)

S7: Further invest in tolerance building towards children with disability

(Addressed to: MoLSW and CSWs, in partnership with MoE, NGOs, media, parents)

Operational Recommendations (O):

O1: Accelerate the sustainable transformation of the Children's Home 'Mladost' into a performant multi-functional complex of services

(Addressed to: Mladost, MoLSW, CSW Herceg Novi, with the assistance of UNICEF and EU)

O2: Improve the design of future projects in terms of risks mitigation and gender mainstreaming

(Addressed to: UNICEF country office)

Lessons learnt:

1. Family and community-based services represent a significant breakthrough for child care, but most vulnerable and neglected children with disabilities could still be in danger.
2. Securing ownership and empowerment of national counterparts may decrease efficiency of support on short-term, but yield important investment returns on long-term.
3. Flexibility in project implementation is needed to cope with emerging needs and benefit of arising opportunities.

1. CONTEXT AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 Project Context

Political, Economic and Demographic Context

Montenegro became independent in 2006 and the same year was accepted as the 192nd **member state of the United Nations (UN)** and the 47th **member state of the Council of Europe**. A Stabilization and Association Agreement was signed with the European Union (EU) in 2007. Montenegro presented its official application for membership to the EU in 2008 and was awarded the **status of candidate country in December 2010**. The prospect of EU membership initiated reforms aimed to absorb the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* into national legislation. Observance of human rights and in particular the rights of the child is part of the political criterion for accession and represents an important part of the enlargement policy for Montenegro, in accordance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Montenegro belongs to a group of countries labelled as being in the **efficiency-driven stage of development** with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of 6,882 USD in 2012.³ The Montenegrin economy is burdened by a **high unemployment rate** and grey economy. According to the 2011 population census, Montenegro has 620,029 inhabitants, of whom 63% live in urban settlements. The most densely populated is the capital of Montenegro, Podgorica, where 30% of the entire population is living. According to last census (2011), there are **145,126 children** (75,367 boys and 69,759 girls), making 23.4% of overall population.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

Poverty in Montenegro fell rapidly after independence, but these gains have been completely reversed since the onset of the crisis in 2008. The Montenegro Statistical Office (MONSTAT) and the World Bank estimate that the poverty headcount rate at the national poverty line fell from 11.3% in 2006 to 4.9% in 2008, before steadily increasing back to **11.3% in 2012**. Spatial differences in poverty have narrowed over time but remain a concern; households in the mountainous North are twice as likely to be poor than their Southern compatriots, and rural dwellers are twice as likely to be poor than urban residents. Income inequality has remained fairly constant.⁴ This is confirmed by the distribution of Material Support (MO) which in Northern municipalities covers from 8.18% to 18.84% of population, while in Southern municipalities this poverty indicator is 1.53% to 3.24% only.

The recent UNICEF study on child poverty in Montenegro⁵ provides for the first time accurate and reliable data on the number of children who grow up in poverty. **Children are more exposed to poverty than adults**: 10% of children and 6.1% of adults are living in poverty in Montenegro, with a monthly spending less than 169.13 EUR. This means that **every 10th child lives in poverty (or 14,500 children)**. Boys and girls are equally exposed to poverty, and the youngest (children under the age of five) are most vulnerable, with a poverty rate of 13%. Poverty indicators show that children in the Northern municipalities in Montenegro are much more affected by poverty than their peers in other regions.

Social exclusion is mainly concentrated among certain vulnerable groups of the population: social welfare system beneficiaries (11.9% of households are socially excluded); long term unemployed

³ World Economic Forum (2013), "The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014", Geneva

⁴ World Bank Group (2014), "Montenegro Partnership. Country Program Snapshot"

⁵ UNICEF (2012), "Child Poverty in Montenegro", Podgorica

(10% of households); pensioners (8.9% of households); people with disabilities (5% of households); Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population (14.1% of households); and refugees and Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs (8.3% of households).⁶ The situation of children from those categories (except pensioners) is even worse.

Vulnerable Children in Montenegro

There is no official statistics on the number of persons with disabilities but it is estimated that there are about 60,000 persons, of whom 18,000 **children with development disabilities**⁷. The biggest problems faced by these children and their families are the following: physical access barriers, social rejection, contempt of their personality, insufficient social care, public prejudices, low participation in the processes and issues that directly affect them, poor family support services, low social benefits that do not ensure their financial security, restrictive conditions of medical treatment and rehabilitation at home and abroad, and poor dental care. At the same time, significant numbers of “invisible children”, particularly those with special developmental needs, reside in Montenegro out of the grid of health, education and social systems⁸. Although the Commissions for Orientation of Children with Special Educational Needs (COCSSEN) have significantly improved their performance over the past years (from 247 children assessed in 2009 to over 1,300 in the first quarter of 2014), the NGO Coalition for children’s rights assesses that inclusion of children with special educational needs is not yet done in a way to provide all children with a quality education in line with their psycho-physical capabilities⁹. The Government, supported by international partners, has undertaken important measures to improve the situation, most notably through reforms in the education sector to promote inclusive education, the behaviour change campaign “It’s about Ability” conducted from 2010 until 2013, the reform in the social welfare and child protection sector since 2011 and the development over the last three years of day care services for children with disability which are of great help for the children and their families. Additional services such as personal assistant and assistant at school for children with special educational needs that are in regular education system are secured through the project “Works of public interest” run by the National Employment Agency.

In 2010, Montenegro had 367 **children residing in institutions**. The rate of institutionalization of children per capita was among the highest in Europe. With the reform of social care system and the adoption of new Law on Social and Children Protection (2013) and Strategy for Social and Children Protection 2013-2017, a new approach was introduced, requiring the transformation of residential institutions into resource centres aimed to provide services for supporting independent living as well as counselling, therapeutic, social and educational services. Consequently, even at the very beginning of reform, the number of children residing in institutions has significantly dropped to 236 children in 2013 (this figure includes children in Resource Centres, which are former special schools which have undergone transformation under the leadership of the Ministry of Education). Significant reductions occurred in the Children’s Home ‘Mladost’ in Bijela. The special institution for children and adults with learning disabilities ‘Komanski Most’ in Podgorica has been under scrutiny following the report of the Committee for Prevention of Torture (CPT) from 2008 which signalled neglect and abuse upon residents and which was taken over by media reports. The oversight NGOs monitoring the respect for human rights in this institution reported significant improvements of care and a decrease in number of persons residing at ‘Komanski Most’ over the period 2011-2013¹⁰. Thanks to UNICEF’s work and

⁶ UNDP (2009), “National Human Development Report 2009, Montenegro: Society for All”

⁷ Government of Montenegro (2008), “Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disability in Montenegro for the period 2008-2016”, p.27

⁸ Government of Montenegro (2013), Strategy for Social and Child Protection in Montenegro, 2013-2017, Podgorica

⁹ Submission from the Montenegro Informal Coalition of non-governmental organizations for Children Rights regarding the Universal Periodic Review of Montenegro, 15th Session, 21st January – February 2013

¹⁰ Human Rights Action, Centre for Antidiscrimination “Equista”, Centre for Civic Education, Women’s Safe House (2013), “Respect for Human Rights of Residents in the Public Institution “Komanski Most”, Podgorica

advocacy, since 2007 no new admissions of children were allowed to 'Komanski Most' Institute. Instead, and due to the lack of family or community-based alternatives, more children with disabilities have been placed in 'Mladost' and some continued to be placed in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Efforts have been made to develop new services, particularly Small Group Homes (SGHs), in order to have more suitable accommodation and assistance to those children¹¹. The CPT report from 2013 acknowledges improvements in living conditions in the institution, notes the plan of setting up SGHs, praises the development of Individual Rehabilitation Plans for Children and shares the opinion of the management that "the number of ward-based staff, in particular of nurses and carers, was still insufficient"¹². Due to lack of services in Montenegro, in 2013 there were 77 children and adults with different categories of developmental needs that were placed in different institutions outside of Montenegro, of which 28 children.

Fostering of **children without parental care** mainly exists in the form of kinship care while non-kinship fostering is in its early stage of development. The rate of adoption is very low. Non-kinship fostering, as a protective way of care for children without parental care, was not sufficiently developed and promoted in Montenegro. Kinship care has been developed spontaneously, without sufficient support from the system. In 2013, a report of the NGO Coalition for children's rights highlighted that the responsible state bodies neither provide training for kinship foster families nor carry out systematic monitoring or provide support to foster parents and fostered children.¹³ Overall, the total number of children placed in foster care has been slowly rising over the last years, reaching 348 children at the end of 2013, according to data provided by UNICEF (based on MoLSW data) to the evaluation team.

Child Protection Policy and Legal Framework

At the policy level, social and child protection has been defined by the **Strategy for the Social and Child Welfare Development 2008-2012**, and more recently by the **Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System in Montenegro 2013-2017** as well as by the new National Action Plan for Children 2013-2017. In practice, service delivery and policy frameworks did not always meet the standards established in the 2008-2012 Strategy, which was in place when the Project started. Additionally, the implementation has been slower than anticipated. The Strategy defined the development policy for social and child protection in relation to other systems and activities in society including decentralization, participation of citizens and beneficiaries in decision making about the resources available and the ways of satisfying needs, enhancement of efficiency for material benefits and the provision of good quality services in social and child protection. The Strategy clearly pointed out the weaknesses of the system: centralization and financing and planning of funds. Furthermore, given the estimated number of over 80 sectorial strategies in Montenegro¹⁴ most of which have impact on children, it was and still is very hard to ensure their implementation in a coherent and integrated fashion.

The recently adopted **National Action Plan for Children 2013-2017** calls for decentralization of social services which was, in the pre-Project situation, reflected in eight municipalities (Bijelo Polje, Bar, Berane, Niksic, Tivat, Kotor, Rozaje, Ulcinj) that have developed or initiated the development of **Local Plans of Actions (LPAs) for Children**, also with assistance from UNICEF.

¹¹ UNICEF Consultant developed a Proposal for establishment of SGHs in 2008.

¹² Council of Europe CPT (2014), "Report to the Government of Montenegro on the visit to Montenegro carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 13 to 20 February 2013, CPT/Inf (2014) 16, Strasbourg, page 46.

¹³ Submission from the Montenegro Informal Coalition of non-governmental organizations for Children Rights regarding the Universal Periodic Review of Montenegro, 15th Session, 21st January – February 2013

¹⁴ e.g. Strategy for improvement of position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2012-2016; National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings 2012 – 2018, Strategy for the Protection against Family Violence 2011-2015, Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro 2008-2016, etc.

Other strategic documents of fundamental importance for child protection are the **Strategy and Action Plan for the Development of Fostering 2012-2016** which aim to promote fostering as 'less restrictive form of protection' of children without parental care and establish an efficient system for financing of foster care.

Although these several strategies and action plans represent an important step forward in the implementation of an improved child protection system and show the Government's commitment for the progressive realisation of children's rights, they are not properly costed and it is unclear what financial resources are needed to implement the various envisaged measures.

Until 2013, the main law regulating the social and child protection system, adopted in 2005, was protectionist and did not ensure participation of the client in the design and implementation of services. In addition, placement in an institution was stipulated as a right of the child rather than a measure of a last resort which should be used for the shortest time possible. As a result, the child protection system has relied heavily on institutional care, as well as on the provision of financial benefits for children and people in need. The new **Law on Social and Child Protection adopted in 2013** is broadly in line with the UNCRC Convention and other relevant human rights standards. Prevention of institutionalization and access to services in the least restrictive environment are listed among the principles of social and child protection; the Law envisages the transformation of residential institutions and the reform of centres for social work; it defines institutional placement as a measure of last resort; and it prohibits institutional placement of children aged 0-3 unless all alternatives have been exhausted.

Child Protection Institutional Framework

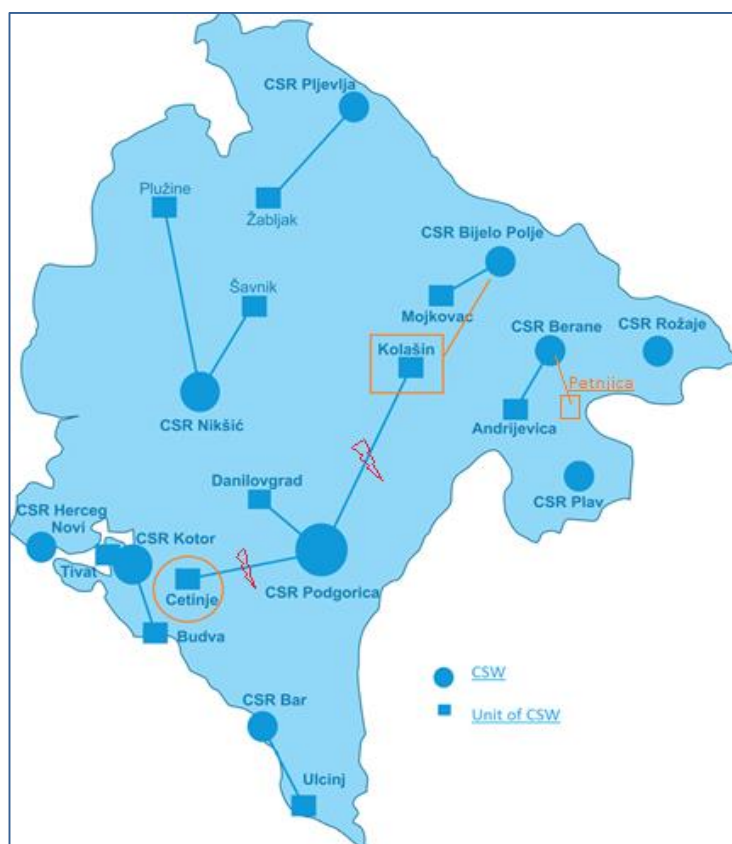
The social protection system in Montenegro is established centrally, through the **Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW)**. The social and child protection department of the MoLSW is leading the change process of the sector and since 2011 it succeeded to put in motion overarching reforms with the support of international partners. Given the intensity and comprehensiveness of the reforms, the department is rather small and would need additional staff and capacity building to successfully cope with the challenges posed by the implementation of the reforms in the years to come, such as the management of the financial aspects of the reform, further deinstitutionalisation of children, reorganisation of the service provision at local level, etc. The legal department of the MoLSW is small as well and it faced difficulties in revising and transposing in legislation the high number of legal drafts (proposals) which have been developed over the last few years by the social and child protection department of the Ministry with the support EU, UNICEF, UNDP and other partners.

The welfare network comprises **Centres for Social Work (CSWs)**, located in ten Montenegrin municipalities¹⁵, with additional local branches and a number of **social institutions** (children's home, other social protection institutions, homes for the elderly, etc.) and **DCCs** for children with disability. An assessment in 2011¹⁶ of the existing network organisation has triggered institutional reorganisation to ensure a better coverage of needs of population. As shown in Figure 1, unit Kolasin will no longer be under the CSW Podgorica but under CSW Bijelo Polje. Cetinje will become a stand-alone CSW, while Petnjica will become a new unit under CSW Berane. There is limited cooperation within the network, as all centres and institutions have strongly autonomous hierarchical contacts and communication lines with the Ministry.

¹⁵ Only three CSWs are municipal centres (Herceg Novi, Plav and Rozaje) while the rest are inter-municipal centres

¹⁶ Zegarac, N. (2011), "Report on the Capacities of the Centers for Social Work in Montenegro", University of Belgrade

Figure 1. Network of Centres for Social Work in Montenegro



Legend: Orange = CSWs units under reorganisation and lines of subordination
Red = discontinued lines of subordination

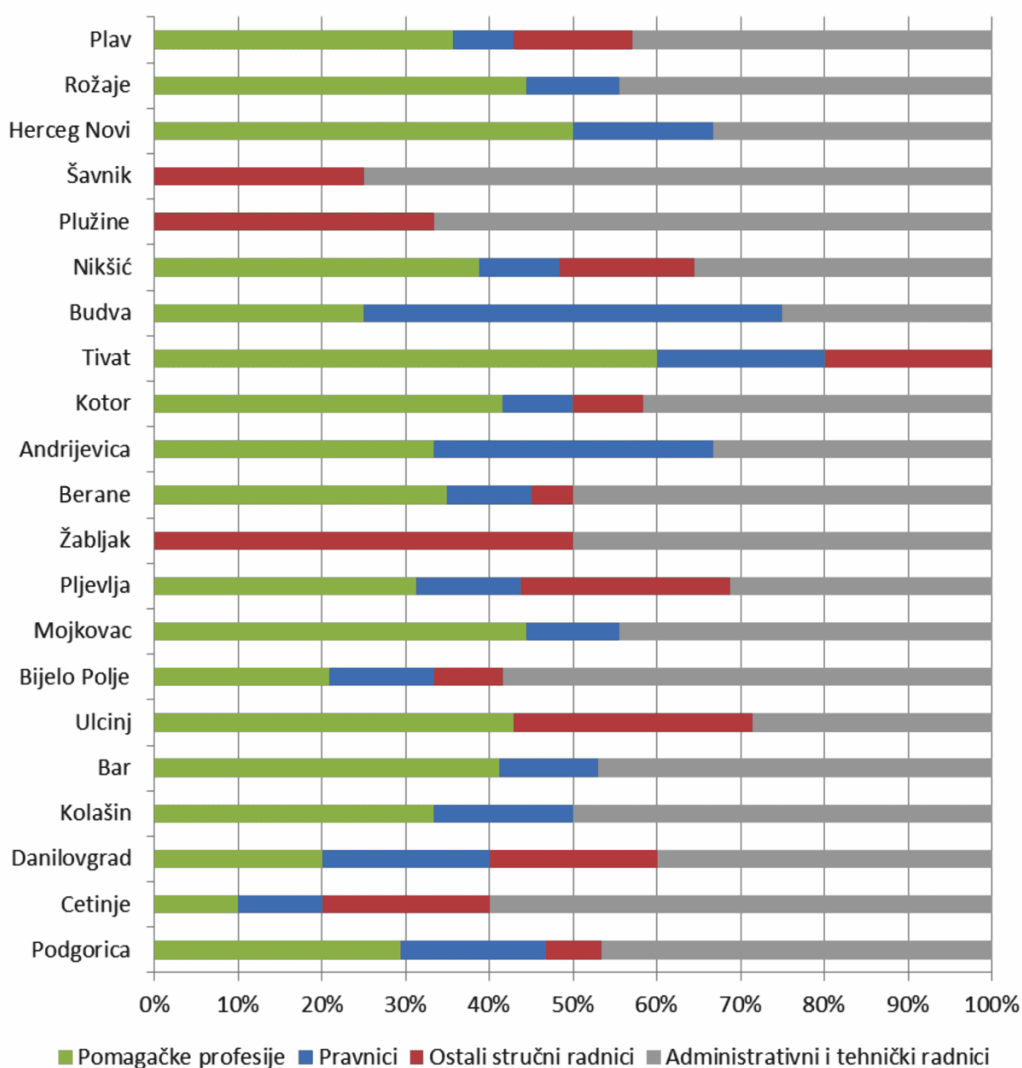
Human Resources Challenges in Child Protection

The reform of the social welfare sector was initiated in 2001, while concrete changes took place in the period 2002-2006 focusing primarily on reforming the financial benefits and enhancing the system's accountability for the provision of social welfare services. More systematic and comprehensive reforms started in 2011. There have been some improvements in the period prior to 2011, however the capacity of the sector was insufficient to bring about long lasting changes.

The sector was weakened by the **insufficient number of qualified professional staff**, especially social workers who directly work with vulnerable groups of children, such as children with special needs, children without parental care and children victims of violence. In 2011, out of 290 employees of CSWs, 44.1% were administrative and technical staff, while those educated to work directly with clients were 32.4% on average per centre. It meant a ratio of 1:3, while based on the primary role of CSWs the ratio should have been 2:1 in favour of social workers.¹⁷ (see Figure 2).

¹⁷ Ibid

Figure 2. Staffing Structure of Centres for Social Work in 2011



Legend: Direct support professions – Lawyers – Other expert personnel – Admin and technical staff
Source: Zegarac, N. (2011)

The staff of the CSWs was insufficiently educated and hampered in their ability to work with clients by an **over-emphasis on administrative tasks** (see Table 1) as well as by a lack of clear accountability and limited resources. These shortcomings were also highlighted by the Ombudsman in the 2013 report¹⁸.

Table 1. Financial Benefits Administered by Centres for Social Work, September 2012

Type of benefit	Annual no. of individual clients	The level of financial giving per month
• Material support to families (MOP)	43,741 (in 14,721 families)	63.5 € (1 family member), 76.2 € (2 members), 91.50 € (3 members), 108 € (4 members) and 120.7 € (5 and more family members)
• Personal Disability Allowance	1,744	108 €
• External Care and Assistance	8,035	63 €
• Accommodation in a Residential type Institution	872	140 – 450 € pending on the type of institution

¹⁸ Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (2014), "Annual Report 2013", Podgorica - Opinion no Broj: 321/13-2 to Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

• Accommodation in another family	403	200 € (the price of accommodation in the institution) + fee for foster parent 30% of the accommodation price for 1 child
• Child allowance	20,478 children (in 10,728 families)	19 € per child from family beneficiary of MOP; 25.5 € per child with disability that can be taught for independent living; 31.8 € per child with disability that cannot be taught for independent living; and 31.8 € per child without parental care (regardless of its placement).
• Equipment for new-born child	635	105 € - one time incentive
• Allowance for child birth and allowance for work half-time	5,283	

Source; Based on data available in Strategy of Social and Child Protection 2013-2017

The **capacity building programmes** which have been carried out over the last three years with the support of international partners (most notably UNICEF, UNDP and EU) have significantly improved the capacity of CSWs to deliver better services in a more coherent manner, based on improved cooperation with other services, families in need and NGOs, and with the support of a better data monitoring system.

At the same time, the **range of community-based social services** was not sufficiently well developed. Data gathered by a mapping of services carried out by UNDP in 2012¹⁹ show that in 17 municipalities there are 127 functional services of social protection, which are delivered by CSWs, residential institutions, NGOs and Red Cross²⁰ to different groups: children (25%, of which 20.3% for children with disability), elderly (21.9%) and persons with disabilities (17.2%), followed by Psychoactive Substance users and victims of family violence (17.2% together). 103 or 80% of all mapped services are provided by NGOs. The CSWs mainly offer guardianship and counselling services as well as administration of various financial benefits (see Table 1), which are presented in detail, along with some community-based services for children, in the UNICEF mapping of child protection services at local, regional and national level conducted in 2013²¹.

In March 2013, the MoLSW launched the first national **child protection database** with a view to providing reliable data on the situation and needs of children and improve the monitoring capacity of the CSWs staff. The database has been in use since January 2013, and as of 10 January 2014, it contained over 16,900 entries (active cases from all years)²². The Social Card / Social Welfare Information System in Montenegro is introducing the standards for record keeping and will enter into force in November 2014.

Minimum standards for child protection services are in the process of development. Preparations have been also done to introduce **licensing procedures for professionals and service providers** as well as **accreditation procedures of training programmes**. According to the new Law on Social and Child Protection, they will have to be developed by mid-2015. The Institute for Social and Child Protection, which is supposed to develop them according to the new law, is to be set up soon.

International Human Rights Commitments of the Country

The **Institution of the Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro** (Ombudsman's office) was established in July 2003, with the Ombudsman's deputy for Child Rights appointed only in 2009. The

¹⁹ Vukovic, D. (2012), "Overview of the social services provision system in Montenegro for 2012", UNDP report, page 6

²⁰ The mapping does not include services of placement in homes (i.e. residential institutions) nor regular activities of CSWs (in the field of guardianship, counseling, social transfers/benefits etc.). It does not include activities of churches either.

²¹ Sataric, N. (2013), Sataric, N. (2013), "Mapping of Comprehensive Child Protection Services at Local, Regional and National Level"

²² UNICEF (2014), "Annual Progress Report 2013. Child Care System Reform"

Office of the Ombudsman publishes annual reports as well as reports on specific subjects as such as the work of CSW in the area of family law procedures and child care²³, guardianship and foster care rights violations, torture and violations of children's and minorities' rights, issuing recommendations to identified entities.

Montenegro is signatory of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and has ratified its Optional Protocols. A detailed list of recommendations deriving from Concluding Observations in 2010 is presented in the relevance section of this report. On the occasion of Ministerial Conference held in Sofia 2012 Montenegro has pledged to deinstitutionalize children, in line with the UNCRC, and particularly of those under the age of three, recognising the need for active prevention of social problems and synchronisation between the Social and Child Protection System, other systems (Health, Education, Judiciary, Employment), private and civil sector.

The country has also ratified the **Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** in 2006. In its latest Concluding Observations²⁴, the CEDAW Committee calls for action towards increase, regular review and adjustment of the levels of family benefits for single mothers to ensure an adequate standard of living for them and their children²⁵. It also call for targeted measures and programmes to economically empower single mothers and ensure that they and their children have adequate and affordable access to housing, education, professional training, health care and cultural life, and protect them against discrimination and abuse.

In 2009 Montenegro ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol** and has adopted the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, Inclusive Education Strategy and the Strategy of Social and Child Protection and, by these documents, provided for a range of measures and activities to improve the position of children with development disabilities.

Montenegro is taking active part in the **UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** process. For the chapter referring to children, Montenegro received around 40 recommendations in the last UPR cycle²⁶, which, besides other things, refer to the adoption of a new National Plan for Children (which was done meanwhile), and also strengthening of capacities of the Council for Children's Rights and of the role of Deputy Ombudsman for children's rights.

Montenegro is supported in its efforts to address child issues and to reform the system by an important number of international donors and organisations, most notably UNICEF and the European Commission, most notably through the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA).

1.2 Project Description

The Project "Child Care System Reform" has aimed to address an important number of challenges and gaps detailed in the former section of the report, mainly by supporting the modernization of the legal framework according to human rights standards, promotion and development of alternative forms of care to child institutionalisation (family and community-based) and prevention of child abandonment based on inter-sectoral cooperation, development of services for children with disabilities,

²³ Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (2013), Opinion no Broj: 321/13-2 to Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

²⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2011), "Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Montenegro", Fiftieth session, Geneva, 3 – 21 October 2011

²⁵ UNICEF has submitted to MoLSW a paper with proposals for support of single parents at risk.

²⁶ CEDEM and Civic Alliance (2013), "Report on Second UPR Cycle in Montenegro - cross section of UPR recommendations and key challenges in the implementation, Children's rights (recommendations 117.12-117.15, 117.17–117.18, 118.2–118.5, 118.10, 119.9)

improvement of CSWs' capacities to address the needs of children at risk and their families, supporting the development of a quality assurance system (quality standards, licensing of professionals and service providers, accreditation of training programmes).

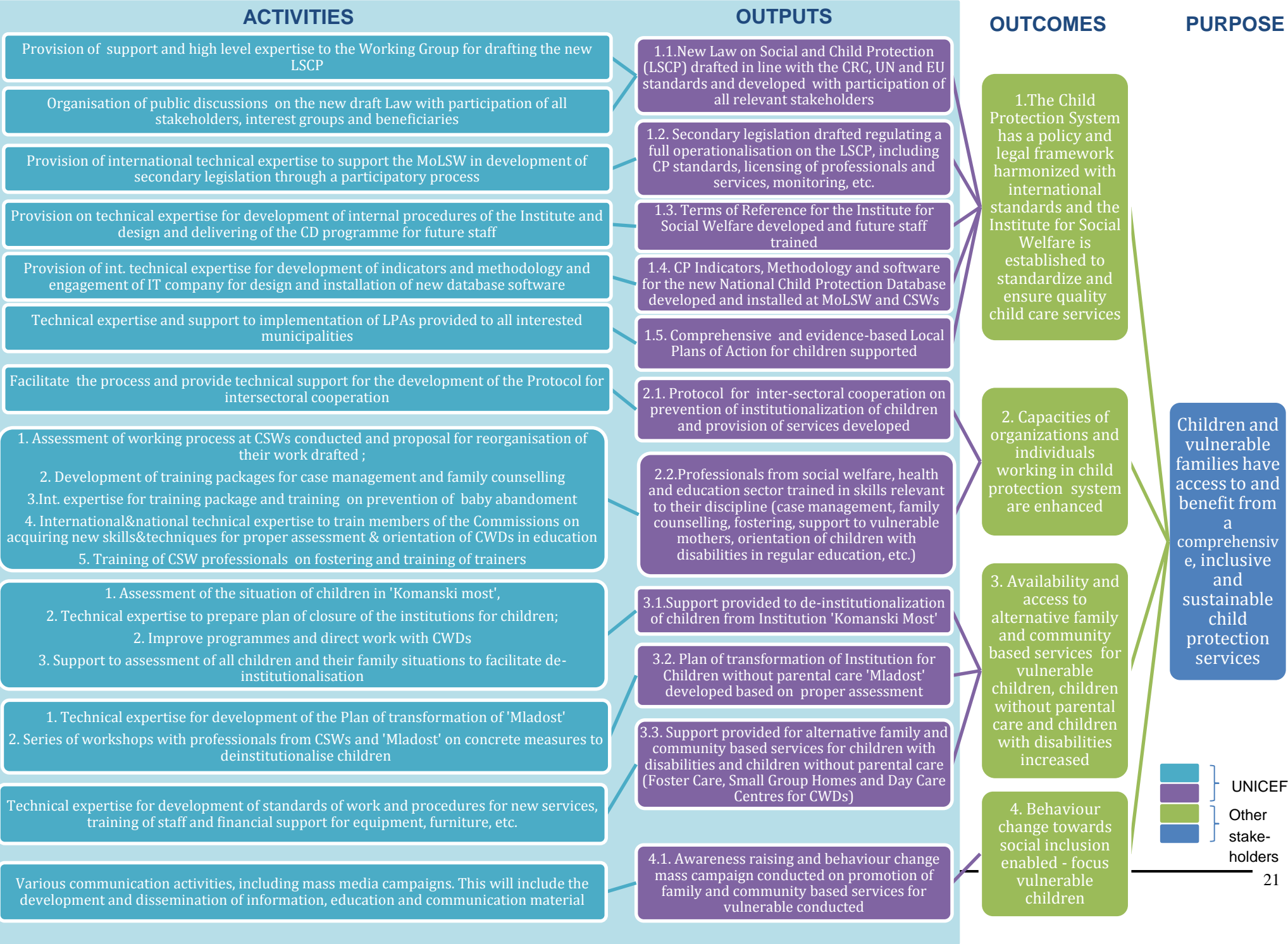
The Project is part of the "Social Welfare and Child Care System Reform: Enhancing Social Inclusion" IPA 2010 (henceforth referred to as the "Social Inclusion Project"), which consists of three components: a) "Inclusive education services", implemented by a service contractor (Consortium Dominus) and managed by the European Union Delegation (EUD) (total budget 662,000 EUR); b) "Social Welfare Reform", implemented by UNDP (total budget 1,298,440 EUR), and c) "Child Care System Reform", implemented by UNICEF (total budget 1,374,560 EUR).

The subject of this summative Final Evaluation is only "Child Care System Reform" (henceforth referred to as "The Project"), i.e. the third component of the Social Inclusion Project, as clearly scoped in section 2 of the Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex 1).

The ToR, the Description of Action (DoA), the updated Logframe²⁷ (Annex 2) and the Theory of Change (ToC) (Annex 3) provide a comprehensive picture of the main features of the Project under evaluation, its logic and changes foreseen to be brought about by the Project, which are described below. Figure 3 presents a visual overview of the Project's purpose, planned outcomes, outputs and activities.

²⁷ It was updated in the process of the 12-month no-cost extension of the Project as of April 2013.

Figure 3. Theory of Change



Objectives

The **Overall Objective** of the Social Inclusion Project is "The Social Welfare and Education systems have facilitated inclusion of vulnerable, socially excluded groups".

The **Specific Objective** (Purpose) of the Project under evaluation is to enhance access to comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable family and community-based services as an alternative to institutionalization of vulnerable children.

Results

According to the DoA and Logframe, the Project is aimed to achieve its Specific Objective (Purpose) and contribute to the attainment of the Overall Objective by achieving three **Results**:

- R1. The Child Care System has a policy and legal framework harmonized with international standards and the Institute for Social Welfare is established to standardize and ensure quality child care services
- R2. Capacity of professionals in the child care sector is enhanced and vulnerable children and families have improved access to quality preventive and inclusive family and community-based services
- R3. The general public is increasingly aware and sensitized on the child care system reform, social inclusion and family and community-based care

The ToC, prepared by UNICEF Montenegro for this evaluation, slightly reformulates the Results and translate them into four Outcomes, keeping however their initial meaning and spirit:

- O1. The Child Protection System has a policy and legal framework harmonized with international standards and the Institute for Social Welfare is established to standardize and ensure quality child care services (same as R1)
- O2. Capacities of organizations and individuals working in child protection system are enhanced (derived from R2)
- O3. Availability and access to alternative family and community-based services for vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities increased (derived from R2)
- O4. Behaviour change towards social inclusion enabled - focus vulnerable children (reformulation of R3)

Outputs

In line with the intervention logic, the ToC further develops the overarching Results (Outcomes) into several expected **Outputs**, as follows:

Related to Result 1 (Outcome 1 in ToC)

- New Law on Social and Child Protection drafted in line with the CRC, UN and EU standards and developed with participation of all relevant stakeholders
- Secondary legislation regulating a full operationalization of the new Law on Social and Child Protection, including child protection standards, licensing of professionals and services, monitoring, etc.
- Terms of Reference for the Institute for Social Welfare developed and future staff trained
- Child protection indicators, methodology and software for the new National Child Protection Database developed and installed at the MoLSW and CSWs
- Comprehensive and evidence-based Local Plans of Action for children supported

Related to Result 2 (Outcomes 2 and 3 in ToC)

- Protocol for inter-sectoral cooperation on prevention of institutionalization of children and provision of services developed
- Professionals from social welfare, health and education sector trained in skills relevant to their discipline (case management, family counselling, fostering, support to vulnerable mothers, orientation of children with disabilities in regular education, etc.)
- Support provided to de-institutionalization of children from Institution 'Komanski Most'
- Plan of transformation of Institution for Children without parental care 'Mladost' developed based on proper assessment
- Support provided for alternative family and community-based services for children with disabilities and children without parental care (Foster Care, Small Group Homes and DCCs)

Related to Result 3 (Outcome 4 in ToC)

- Awareness raising and behaviour change mass campaign on promotion of family and community-based services for vulnerable conducted

Project Activities

For the achievement of Project outputs and expected results (outcomes), the following activities have been planned (according to the ToC²⁸):

Related to Result 1 (Outcome 1 in ToC)

- ⇒ Provision of support and high level expertise to the Working Group for drafting the new Law on Social and Child Protection
- ⇒ Organisation of public discussions on the new draft Law with participation of all stakeholders, interest groups and beneficiaries
- ⇒ Provision of international technical expertise to support the MoLSW in development of secondary legislation through a participatory process
- ⇒ Provision on technical expertise for development of internal procedures of the Institute and design and delivering of the capacity development programme for future staff
- ⇒ Provision of international technical expertise for development of indicators and methodology and engagement of IT company for design and installation of new database software
- ⇒ Technical expertise and support to implementation of Local Plans of Action for Children (LPAs) provided to all interested municipalities

Related to Result 2 (Outcomes 2 and 3 in ToC)

- ⇒ Facilitate the process and provide technical support for the development of the Protocol for intersectoral cooperation
- ⇒ Assessment of working process at the CSWs conducted and proposal for reorganisation of their work drafted
- ⇒ Development of training packages for case management and family counselling
- ⇒ International expertise for training package and training on prevention of baby abandonment
- ⇒ International and national technical expertise to train members of the Commissions on acquiring new skills and techniques for proper assessment and orientation of CWDs in education
- ⇒ Training of CSW professionals on fostering and training of trainers

²⁸ The ToC reformulates the activities included in the Logframe, but preserves consistency in meaning.

- ⇒ Assessment of the situation of children in 'Komanski Most'
- ⇒ Technical expertise to prepare plan of closure of 'Komanski Most' for children
- ⇒ Improve programmes and direct work with children with disability in 'Komanski Most'
- ⇒ Support to assessment of all children in 'Komanski Most' and their family situations to facilitate de-institutionalisation
- ⇒ Technical expertise for development of the Plan of transformation of 'Mladost'
- ⇒ Series of workshops with professionals from CSWs and 'Mladost' on concrete measures to deinstitutionalise children
- ⇒ Technical expertise for development of standards of work and procedures for new services, training of staff and financial support for equipment, furniture, etc.

Related to Result 3 (Outcome 4 in ToC)

- ⇒ Various communication activities, including mass media campaigns. This will include the development and dissemination of information, education and communication material

Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries

The DoA mentions that the **Target Groups** of the Project consist of social welfare, education and health sectors; policy makers; and civil society. This is a very general definition of the target groups and does not include any quantification. Following the review of the Project documentation, it is the understanding of the evaluation team that the target groups include: ministries of labour and social welfare, education and health; COCSENS; CSWs; child care institutions; DCCs; municipalities; Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in their quality of social services providers and beneficiaries of trainings delivered by the Project; professionals working in the social welfare, health and education sectors.

According to the same document, the **Final Beneficiaries** of the Project are vulnerable and excluded children and families. The ToC specifies (outcome 3) that beneficiary children are vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities.

Strategic Approach

Review of the DoE and first Progress Report 2011 indicates that the following strategies were planned to be used in order to implement the Project:

- build on the on-going efforts of the MoLSW to reform the child care system since 2001 with the support of UNICEF and which are aimed to establish a continuum of services for vulnerable children and families and contribute to the overall results of the Country Programme of Cooperation of UNICEF with the Government of Montenegro;
- implement the Project based on the findings of the comprehensive Analysis of the Social Protection System for Children in Montenegro;
- consider the lessons learned and UNICEF previous experience in deinstitutionalization and child welfare reform, notably: evidence based planning; advocacy and awareness raising on child care system reform with governmental and non-governmental institutions and civil society; comprehensive policy, legislative and institutional reform; capacity building of relevant professionals; provision of external technical expertise for building system and human capacities; focus on Prevention and early identification of vulnerability;
- act both at national and local level to develop regulatory and institutional prerequisites at central Government level, respectively test and implement new approaches at municipality level;

- cultivate sustainable partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders including policy makers, child protection professionals, NGOs and other organisations; involvement of children themselves in the project implementation;
- strengthen coordination mechanisms and encourage coordinated inter-sectoral work to effectively address the issue of inclusion of vulnerable children and children with disabilities;
- closely cooperate with UNDP, the implementing body of the "Social Welfare Reform" component of the Social Inclusion Project, particularly in the area of local planning and development of legislation;
- use participatory approaches for the development of the regulatory framework (laws, by-laws, rulebooks, regulations, standards, etc.), strategies and implementation of Project activities;
- provide technical expertise to strengthen and build the capacity of MoLSW and professionals working in the social welfare, education and health systems; ensure equipment for the establishment of alternative services for children without parental care and for children with disabilities as well as for the implementation of a new data collection and reporting system within the CSWs' network;
- complement the Project activities with a communication component aimed to promote behavioural change towards the most vulnerable groups of children, in particular to promote social inclusion of children without parental care and children with disabilities.

Financing and Duration

The total budget of the Project is 1,374,560 EUR, of which the EU provided 1,249,600 EUR while UNICEF contributed with complementary funds amounting to 124,960 EUR. The implementation of the Project began in January 2011. It was originally due for completion in July 2013, but was extended until July 2014 (from 2.5 years to 3.5 years). The extension was granted by the EUD following the recommendation of the Mid-term evaluation carried out in 2012 and reasoned by the need to complete the planned activities, which were delayed due to the late adoption of the new legal framework (as explained later on in the relevance and efficiency sections of the report).

Implementation partners

The project has been implemented by the MoLSW in partnership with UNICEF Montenegro and in close collaboration with other Montenegrin and international organisations. In the understanding of the evaluation team, the following roles and responsibilities have been agreed:

- **MoLSW** (main partner and central level beneficiary) – leading the decision-making processes concerning the implementation of the Project, including the meetings of the Project Steering Committee; ensure that all Project activities are in line with the national policies and international commitments of Montenegro; coordination and active participation in the working groups aimed to develop the legal, policy and institutional framework; provision of comments and critical reviews on the draft strategies and legislation and advocacy for the adoption by the Montenegrin Government; promotion of intersectoral cooperation in the area of child care; participation in the capacity building activities implemented by the Project; support in the organisation of various public events, round tables, campaign, workshops and conferences.
- **MoE and Ministry of Health (MoH)** - participation in the meetings of the Project Steering Committee, as member organisations; active participation in the working groups aimed to develop the legal, policy and institutional framework; provision of expert inputs and comments on the draft strategies and legislation in the education and health areas affecting the child care and development of vulnerable children; commitment for intersectoral cooperation with the MoLSW in the area of child abandonment prevention and deinstitutionalisation; promote and

allow participation of professionals working in the education and health system (e.g. COCSEN, doctors, nurses, etc.) to take part in the capacity building activities implemented by the Project.

- **CSWs** - participation in the capacity building activities implemented by the Project; testing and implementation of the new data collection and reporting system developed by the Project; provision of information and critical insights for various assessments, studies and researches carried out during the implementation of the Project for collection of evidence to inform policy direction and revision of rulebook; participation in the working groups for the development of standards and other regulations and working procedures relevant to their work; active participation in fostering campaign, workshops and other public events; active involvement in the development and revision of individual care plans of children; participation in capacity building activities.
- **Child Care Institutions ‘Komanski Most’ (Podgorica) and ‘Mladost’ (Bijela)** – participation in the development of institutional transformation plans aimed to deinstitutionalise children hosted in these institutions and discourage further admissions; active involvement in the development and revision of the individual care plans for these children with a view to ensuring family reunification, fostering, access to alternative care or better care in the respective institutions; participation in the working groups for the development of standards and other regulations and working procedures relevant to their work, in capacity building activities and fostering campaign.
- **DCCs** – playing a key role in the prevention of abandonment of children with disability; beneficiaries of Project support for improving their performance (in case of the existing ones) and for setting up and functioning (for the new ones);
- **Municipalities** – active involvement in the development and promotion of LPAs and implementation of the fostering campaign; cooperation with the CSWs, DCCs and NGOs to ensure optimal functioning of the services provided by these organisations (including provision of land and financial resources for salaries, utilities, other running costs), in line with new operational rules and procedures introduced by the Project.
- **CSOs**, notably Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities, “Child Rights Centre” Montenegro, “Child Rights Centre” Belgrade, Forum MNE, Parents’ Association “Oaza” – contribution to the revision and development of the legal framework (participation in working groups); participation in the capacity building activities; active engagement in the fostering campaign and advocacy initiatives promoted by the Project.
- **UNDP** - participation in the meetings of the Project Steering Committee; joint engagement with UNICEF in local planning and development of legislation.

Other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Project were the Ministry of Finance (MoF), National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) and Union of Municipalities, as members of the Project Steering Committee as well media.

The role of **UNICEF Country office** in the Project was two-fold: it ensured the technical and financial management of the Project, while also bringing in the technical expertise and policy advocacy leverage for the attainment of envisaged outcomes. Based on its inter-sectoral partnership with key national stakeholders, UNICEF facilitated the dialogue on how legislation, policies, practices and training programmes for professionals can best meet the needs of vulnerable children and families.

The role of the **EUD** was to provide the funds for the implementation of the Project, as well for the other two components of Social Inclusion Project mentioned above (inclusive education and social welfare reform) which are closely connected to the Project under evaluation. As member of the Project

Steering Committee, it has also been in charge of guiding and monitoring the implementation of the Project in close cooperation with UNICEF and the MoLSW.

Management and Implementation arrangements

A **Project Steering Committee** (PSC) was established for regular monitoring, supervision and evaluation of project activities and for decision-making, as appropriate. The Committee is composed of representatives of the MoLSW, the MoE, the MoH, the MoF, UNICEF, the EUD, the UNDP, the Union of Municipalities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, including representatives of the NIPAC office. Its main role is to determine the extent of progress towards the achievement of the objectives.

A **Project Implementation Unit** was set up, partially based in UNICEF, with the task to ensure efficiency and expertise in the operational management of the Project (Child Protection Officer and Child Protection Assistant), and partially based in the joint Project Implementation Office shared with UNDP (Child Protection consultant and two additional consultants to support the MoLSW in the implementation of the reform).

2. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Purpose, Objectives and Scope

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), appended as Annex 1 to this report, the evaluation is a summative final Project evaluation whose **Purpose** is to evaluate the final (end) results and achievements of Component 3 “Child Care System Reform” of the Social Inclusion Project in relation to the project logframe and ToC. The ToR clearly scope the evaluation in section 2, indicating that only component 3 of the Project, implemented by UNICEF, will be evaluated. The other two components, implemented by different contractors (Consortium Dominus and UNDP) are not part of this evaluation.

The evaluation is in fact looking at the building blocks of the child care reform and its first years of implementation, the Project being intimately embedded in the change process of the country over the last four years.

The Project will be completed in July 2014. The evaluation took place according to the calendar fixed in the ToR and agreed with UNICEF i.e. from April to July 2014.

The **Specific objectives** of the evaluation are the following:

Specific Objective 1	Provide feedback to UNICEF Montenegro office and its national counterparts on the soundness (defined as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability) and impact of the Project approach in strengthening the capacities of the Child Care System in implementing the reform for the benefit of the most vulnerable and excluded children and families, with the aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Reveal good practices and gaps in approaches,b. Evaluate Project Impact following Project Plan, Project Logframe and Description of the Action.
Specific Objective 2	Based on the experience from the Project implementation to extract general lessons learned and recommendations aimed at further enhancement of the Child Care system reform.
Specific Objective 3	Provide the Delegation of European Union to Montenegro with information on impact of their specific support to the reform of the Child Care System in Montenegro

The ToR specify the main **beneficiaries of the evaluation**. It is intended that the knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by the MoLSW for strengthening the implementation of the new Law on Social and Child Protection (2013) as well as for informing policies and strategies addressed to the most marginalised and multiply disadvantaged children and their families. The results of the evaluation are also aimed to be used by the independent oversight bodies and NGOs representing vulnerable groups to further strengthen their monitoring and advocacy initiatives. The lessons learned and good practices identified by the evaluation are intended to be used by the municipalities for the further development of community services aimed at the most marginalized children. EUD and UNICEF are important stakeholders that will utilise the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation in their future programing and support of the reform of the Child Care System and development of family and community-based services in Montenegro. In the case of

EUD, the results of the evaluation will inform the programming of the EU funds available under the framework of the new IPA Perspective 2014-2020.

As far as the **scope of the evaluation** is concerned, the ToR specify that the Project evaluation covers the entire implementation period (January 2011 – July 2014), having a national geographic coverage. Actually, the evaluation takes place two months before the end of the Project. Given the fact that, at the local level, the Project has worked in several municipalities and considering the available resources and time for this evaluation, field consultations, interviews, focus groups and discussion groups were carried out only in a selected number of sites. The sample is described in the section 2.2.3 below.

The main **Units of Analysis** for this evaluation are the following:

- MoLSW, from the perspective of main Project partner and beneficiary of revised legal, policy and institutional framework as well as capacity building initiatives;
- municipalities, as beneficiaries of support for the development and promotion of LPAs and crucial stakeholders for ensuring the financial sustainability of child protection services developed by the Project;
- CSWs professionals as beneficiaries of trainings, technical assistance and active participants in the implementation of the Project, including the fostering campaign;
- child care institutions 'Komanski Most' and 'Mladost', as key actors in the transformation of their mandate and way of operation as well as participants in capacity building and fostering campaign;
- DCCs as beneficiaries of support for their setting up and functioning as well as for improving the capacity of the existing ones;
- CSOs, as oversight and advocacy organisations, and service delivery agencies, which were engaged in the revision of the legal framework and benefitted of trainings.

Main themes addressed by the evaluation concern modernization of policy, legislation and work practices, child abandonment prevention, reduction of children without parental care in residential institutions, decrease of equity gaps in access to child care services of vulnerable children and parents, capacity building of professionals working in the social welfare, education and health systems.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The Evaluation Phases

The evaluation has been carried out in three consecutive phases:



1. Inception/Desk Phase

The evaluation commenced on 14 April 2014, after the conclusion of the contract between UNICEF and Promeso Consulting. The Inception Phase has coincided with the Desk Phase.

An important element of the Inception Phase was to undertake an evaluability assessment of the scope of work planned, based on resources available. Within the scope of the current assignment, the evaluability assessment considered the Evaluation Questions (EQs), intervention logic and the associated indicators (descriptors) to determine the type of information that could be sourced from secondary sources and the areas which require primary data collection. Apart from some constraints highlighted below, the Project was evaluable and information (already available and which could be collected) was sufficient to implement the evaluation methodology detailed in the following section.

UNICEF Country Office has provided a comprehensive set of documents, relevant for this evaluation. The team reviewed the project documents (IPA 2010 Identification Fiche, Contribution Agreement, DoE and annexes, ToC, annual progress reports, financial reports, several project deliverables), monitoring and evaluation reports (mid-term evaluation, ROMs), key laws and strategies, European Commission (EC) progress reports and human rights international commitments of Montenegro, provided by UNICEF or downloaded from Government and EU websites. During the review of Project documentation, a number of missing documents and data gaps have been identified. UNICEF country office has timely provided all information and documents requested by the evaluation team. The review of secondary sources of information continued during the next phases of the evaluation as soon as new documents and information were received by the evaluation team.

The ToC was developed retrospectively and only for the purpose of this evaluation. It would have been far more useful to construct it at the beginning of a Project, as outcomes and processes are viewed differently with hindsight. Developing a ToC at the end of a project risks of inducing a bias in choosing indicators and targets and of being deprived of the required participatory level of key stakeholders and ownership for change.

During this phase, primary data collection methods were designed to cover the identified information gaps and ensure the required level of information needed to answer the evaluation questions in relation to the various units of analysis. These methods are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Primary Data Collection Methods

Stakeholders	Research method	Tool	Sample (as the case)
UNICEF management and project team	5 in-depth interviews	Interview guide	Representative, Project coordinator – CO Officer, M&E focal point, Child Protection Officer (senior), UNICEF consultants
MoLSW, MoE, MoH, Ministry of Finance, NIPAC, Parliament, Ombudsman, Union of Municipalities, EUD, UNDP, US Office for Defence Cooperation, 'Mladost' management, 'Komanski Most' institution management, CSWs Cetinje and Bijelo Polje, Forum MNE, Parents' Association Pljevlja, Children's Rights Centre	21 Semi-structured interviews	Interview guide	Representatives of all relevant stakeholders, nominated by their management to meet the evaluation team (as the case)

Municipalities, local service providers and NGOs	3 Discussion groups	Discussion guide	Podgorica, Cetinje and Bijelo Polje, 8-10 participants/group in each location (representatives of municipality, CSW, COCSEN, DCCs, NGOs)
Professionals (social workers, psychologists, special educators, pedagogues, doctors, nurses, etc.) who were trained/ benefitted of assistance from the Project	5 Focus groups	Focus group guide	6-8 participants/group in each sampled location (Podgorica, Cetinje, Bijelo Polje) and institutions ('Komanski Most' and 'Mladost')
Parents of children in DCCs, institutions and foster care	3 Focus groups	Focus group guide	6-8 participants/group in each sampled location (Podgorica, Cetinje, Bijelo Polje)
Children who participated in the campaign "Every Child Needs A Family"	1 Focus group	Focus group guide	6-8 children from coastal municipalities, who were engaged in producing one-minute videos for the campaign; children whose parents' consent was obtained prior to the discussion
Children in residential care	1 Focus group girls 1 Focus group boys	Focus group guide	Children's Home 'Mladost' (Bijela), 6-8 children/group Homogeneous groups: gender and age range (13-14 years old)
Residential care institutions, CSWs, DCCs	6 Participant observations ²⁹	Site visit	Site visits to 'Komanski Most' (Podgorica), 'Mladost' (Bijela), CSWs and DCCs in Cetinje and Bijelo Polje

The selection of secondary sources of information in relation to the employed research method has been reasoned by the following methodological aspects:

- It is common knowledge that each data collection method has its own limitations and can't stand alone; therefore, the evaluation team included in the data collection framework a wide range of sources to triangulate the findings and inform the analysis.
- Semi-structured interviews with key informants at national and local level have been also envisaged to collect qualitative data and capture various perspectives on the way the Project addressed the complexity of issues in child care reform, monitoring and progressive realisation of children's rights, how the Project worked and how could have worked better for advancing the implementation of reforms.
- The evaluation team wanted to receive in-depth feedback from as many stakeholders as possible and it is often not possible to conduct interviews with individual respondents. Therefore, the team included, as secondary source of information, focus groups and discussion groups with professionals and parents, respectively with municipalities, CSWs, DCCs and NGOs.
- The evaluation team also designed a representative sample of municipalities for site visits, used to conduct in-depth interviews, focus groups and discussion groups with key informants mentioned above and to obtain factual evidence through participant observation. The sampling criteria and justification for the selection of Podgorica, Cetinje and Bijelo Polje are detailed below in section 2.2.3.
- Contact with final beneficiaries is crucial for the evaluation. Given the timeframe and available resources of this evaluation, it would have been not feasible to conduct a survey among beneficiary children and parents. Instead, the evaluation team planned focus groups with children, parents and professionals to collect vital impressions on the relevance, accessibility and quality of provided services on relevant issues for this evaluation.

²⁹ "In situ, non-disruptive observation of the daily activity of actors and/or beneficiary of the evaluated intervention. The researcher tries to understand the situation "from the inside". (EVALSED Guide, 2013)

A number of **data collection and evaluation tools** have been also developed, including:

- List of reference documents (Annex 4);
- Evaluation Matrix, grouping the evaluation questions under the evaluation criteria (Annex 5);
- Sampling of sites (municipalities) to be visited (see section 2.2.3 of the report);
- Interview Guides for semi-structured interviews, focus groups and discussion groups (Annex 6);
- Performance Rating scale for Project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (see section 2.2.2 of the report).

The Inception/Desk Phase ended with the drafting of Inception Report, which included a revised methodology, a detailed work plan, the full set of the proposed data collection and evaluation tools, sample as well as an annotated outline of the final report. This Phase lasted from 14 to 25 April 2014.

II. Field Phase

The Field Phase has been mainly devoted to the collection of primary data from key stakeholders at national and local levels, based on the data collection and evaluation instruments developed during the Inception/Desk Phase. The selection of sites to be visited has been based on the sampling methodology and the data collection methods described in Table 2. The people who were consulted during the evaluation are listed in Annex 7.

The Field Phase, which lasted between 8 and 20 May 2014, ended with a debriefing of UNICEF concerning the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team. The debriefing took place on 20 May 2014.

III. Synthesis Phase

Information and facts collected during the first two phases were analysed and integrated in the Draft Evaluation Report, in line with the "UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards" (Evaluation Office, UNICEF NYHQ, September 2004). The analysis was based on the Evaluation Matrix and the Performance Rating scale developed during the Inception/Desk Phase of the evaluation process.

All standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, set in the ToR, were endorsed by the evaluation team for the following reasons:

- they are sufficient to provide a sound assessment of the quality, value and significance of the aid intervention, are all necessary and equally important;
- they are fully appropriate for the evaluation purpose, after careful examination of the project's strategy and ToC;
- they are in line with internationally recognised best practice for a summative final evaluation of a project and also consistent with recommended methodologies for evaluating external assistance.

More specifically, the standard evaluation criteria were approached as follows:

- a) **Relevance:** The assessment of the Project relevance was based on the analysis of the national and local context, the challenges of the child care reform process, the relevance of the Project for the national strategies and policies, the international human rights commitments of Montenegro and the needs and priorities of various stakeholders and beneficiaries. It also assessed if the Project remained relevant during its lifetime.

- b) **Effectiveness:** Using the Project's Logframe and ToC, the evaluation team analysed to what extent the outcomes obtained following the implementation of activities have contributed to the attainment of the planned objectives. Based on evidence collected during the first two phases of the evaluation, the report explains the factors that contributed or hampered the achievement of results in terms of supporting the development of a coherent legislative and policy framework, establishment of quality child protection services for most vulnerable children, capacity building of professionals to manage the reform process and of service providers to provide quality assistance and strengthening the monitoring and reporting capacity of the social welfare system related to child care reform. The report discusses the unplanned effects (positive or negative) of the Project, too.
- c) **Efficiency:** The report analyses how well UNICEF organized itself in delivering its work with regard to managerial and budget efficiency of the two pronged delivery modalities i.e. at national and municipality level. Analysis of efficiency was based on the assessment of outputs/activities in relation to Project inputs, costs and planned timelines. The report also incorporates a discussion on the cost-effectiveness of child care services developed within the Project. Synergy with components 1 and 2 of the Social Inclusion Project (IPA 2010) and with similar interventions and projects are reviewed as well.
- d) **Impact:** Even though some of the evaluation questions in the ToR request a quantifiable approach, overall, the questions and Section 7 of ToR indicate a preference for an approach oriented towards theory-based impact evaluation. A theory-based impact evaluation focuses on programme theory (ToC), i.e. the assumptions of decision makers and stakeholders on the preconditions, mechanism and context, making an intervention to work. A theory-based impact evaluation tests these assumptions against the observed results following the different steps of the intervention logic and examines other influencing factors. This enables evaluation to explain why and how results have occurred and to appraise UNICEF's contribution and of other stakeholders. The key task of the evaluation team was to examine to what extent the Project contributed to changes in human development as measured by children's well-being and social inclusion. The team also assessed if the Project has accelerated the pace of change and if it gave direction to reforms in the area of deinstitutionalisation of children with disability and children without parental care, sustainable development of family and community-based services and change in public attitudes regarding family-based alternatives for children without parental care.
- e) **Sustainability:** The assessment recognises that many achievements takes time to emerge and become fully functional. Many external factors shape this and vary over time. In the light of these aspects and considering that the Project has not be finished at the time of this evaluation, the assessment of sustainability focused on the likelihood that outcomes and benefits generated by the Project continue to exist without or with a lower level of external support. The report looks to what extent the prerequisites for sustainability are in place or are being put in place, the national and local commitment and ownership over achievements, the developed partnerships and inter/cross-sectoral cooperation. The evaluation report reviews sustainability factors in terms of project design, process, implementation and national context. Sustainability is analysed from various perspectives: legal/policy, institutional, capacity building, financial.

The Synthesis Phase took place from 21 May until 23 June 2014. The Draft Evaluation Report was released on 9 June 2014 and distributed to all key stakeholders. The public presentation of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations took place on 4 July 2014 in Podgorica. The feedback received from all key stakeholders was incorporated in this Final Evaluation Report.

2.2.2 The Evaluation Questions and Performance Rating

The ToR specify:

- 27 Evaluation Questions (EQs) linked to the five evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability);
- 4 EQ linked to human rights-based approach, equity, gender mainstreaming and ethics of Project design.

Based on this, a comprehensive Evaluation Matrix has been developed (Annex 5). All EQs – *formulated as in the ToR or slightly reformulated and rearranged* - have been assigned to a specific evaluation criterion. The two EQs on human rights and gender equality included under relevance and efficiency criteria in the ToR have been moved to the list of questions on human rights-based approach and other cross-cutting issues (under judgement criteria) to ensure a coherent and consolidated response. As a result, a number of 28 EQs have been introduced in the Evaluation Matrix. For each EQ, one or several judgement criteria have been included as well as related quantitative and qualitative indicators. Sources of information and methods of data collection have been also introduced in the Matrix. Table 3 presents an overview of the grouping of questions.

Table 3. Grouping of questions and issues in the Evaluation Matrix

Group	Description	No. of EQ	EQ
EVALUATION CRITERIA			
1	Relevance	4	EQ 1-4
2	Effectiveness	7	EQ 5-11
3	Efficiency	3	EQ 12-14
4	Impact	4	EQ15-18
5	Sustainability	6	EQ 19-24
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES			
6	Child rights, equity, gender mainstreaming, design ethics	4	EQ 25-28

The questions in the Evaluation Matrix have been to the extent possible framed based on the units of analysis, indicating their relative importance and the relative emphasis on the different target groups.

The rating of the Project performance was determined by separately evaluating and ranking the evaluation criteria specified in the ToR. Each criterion was assigned a scale point between 0 and 3. A descriptor corresponding to each scale point was also assigned. Fixed cut-off points were used to assign appropriate descriptors (highly satisfactory, satisfactory, moderately satisfactory, moderately unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory and highly unsatisfactory) to the aggregate numeric rating. The table below summarizes the approach and shows the relationship between the evaluation criteria, rating descriptors and scale points.

Table 4. Performance Rating

Evaluation criterion	Definition according to the ToR	Rating descriptor	Scale point
1. Relevance	The extent to which the Project responded to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries.	Highly relevant Relevant Partly relevant	3 2 1

		Irrelevant	0
2. Effectiveness	The extent to which the Project met its results (outcomes) as defined in the Logframe and ToC	Highly effective Effective Moderately effective Ineffective	3 2 1 0
3. Efficiency	The extent to which the Project management ensured timeliness and efficient use of resources.	Highly efficient Efficient Moderately efficient Inefficient	3 2 1 0
4. Impact	The extent to which the Project contributed to ensuring that more vulnerable children and their families have access to and benefit from a comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable child protection system	High impact level Good impact level Low impact level No impact	3 2 1 0
5. Sustainability	The extent to which the achieved Project results (outcomes) are sustainable from a policy, institutional and financial point of view.	Most likely Likely Less likely Unlikely	3 2 1 0

2.2.3 Evaluation sample

Apart from desk review of relevant documentation, semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus/discussion groups, the evaluation methodology included site visits to a sample of municipalities for in-depth review, selected on the basis of several sampling criteria, as follows:

- 1) *Regional poverty* (usually counting for child abandonment and social exclusion), i.e. municipalities belonging to regions with different poverty levels: Northern region – 18.3% poverty rate³⁰; Central region: 7.9% poverty rate; Coastal region: 9% poverty rate
- 2) *Local child care planning*, i.e. municipalities supported by the Project to develop a LPA or promote an existing LPA – it was assessed that municipalities have registered significant improvements in the quality of life of children after the adoption and implementation of such a plan
- 3) *Hosting of a Child Care Institution targeted by the Project* i.e. 'Komanski Most' and 'Mladost' – these institutions have been targeted by the Project and specifically included in the evaluation questions
- 4) *(foreseen) Hosting of a Small Group Home* – important from the perspective of taking over the functioning costs by local authorities, a sustainability dimension of the Project investment
- 5) *Fostering* i.e. municipalities with kinship and non-kinship foster parents – foster care is an important family-based alternative care service promoted by the Project, both in legislation and capacity building activities, and also through the information campaign
- 6) *Presence of a functioning DCC* – DCCs represent an important pillar of the abandonment prevention of children with disability and of their social inclusion; it is of utmost relevance to discuss with the parents of these children and with the staff of DCCs who participated in the trainings delivered by the Project

The Sample (Table 5) which resulted after the review of key Project documentation and analysis against sampling criteria was composed of four municipalities, representing 19% of the total number of municipalities targeted by the Project: Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Cetinje and Bijela (Herceg Novi).

³⁰ Regional Development Law, 2011; MONSTAT 2013

Table 5. Evaluation Sample

Sampling criteria	Total	Podgorica	Cetinje	Bijela (Herceg Novi)	Bijelo Polje
Regional Poverty					
- Northern region (18.3%)	1	-	-	-	yes
- Central region (7.9%)	2	yes	yes	-	-
- Coastal region (9%)	1	-	-	yes	-
Local Child Care Planning					
- LPA developed	1	-	yes*	-	-
- LPA promoted	1	-	-	-	yes
Child Care Institutions targeted by the Project					
- Komanski Most	1	yes	-	-	-
- Mladost	1	-	-	yes	-
Hosting of Small Group Home	1	-	-	-	yes**
Fostering					
- Kinship	4	yes	yes	yes***	yes
- Non-kinship	2	yes	no	yes***	no
Functioning DCC supported by the Project	2	-****	1	-****	1

* The only LPA developed with the support of the Project is in Cetinje; other five municipalities were supported only in the promotion of their plans

** The only municipality where a Small Group Home is going to be set up during the Project

*** In Herceg Novi municipality

**** The DCC in Podgorica is currently under construction (rehabilitation works supported by the Project). There is a DCC in Igalo (Herceg Novi municipality), but will not be visited by the evaluation team as focus will be on Bijela.

2.2.4 Evaluation constraints

There have been several constraints in carrying out the evaluation. They are presented in Table 6 together with corresponding mitigation strategies.

Table 6. Constraints to the Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies

Constraint	Mitigation approaches
No disaggregation of data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gender in terms of baselines and targets of indicators of the Project; - children residing in Children's Home 'Mladost' institution (gender, age groups, reasons for departure); - decisions of COCSENs (regular education, special schools, DCCs, gender). 	Following request of the evaluation team and provision of a template for data presentation, UNICEF provided gender-disaggregated data for some of the project results, however measurement of achievements on gender equality against targets was not possible. Children's Home 'Mladost' has also provided disaggregated data. The MoE has not provided disaggregated data despite repeated reminders; therefore only overall figures have been used.
No Training Needs Assessments developed prior to the delivery of training courses, which might have impeded the evaluation of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of capacity building investment of the Project	The evaluation team reconstructed the training needs retrospectively, based on the training reports, interviews with key informants and focus groups with professionals who took part in the training events

2.3 Evaluation Design

The methodology model designed for this evaluation aimed to utilize the best mix of data gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions within the limits of resources and availability of data. The evaluation was designed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Project based on the DoA, Project Logframe and ToC, including indicators that the Project used for monitoring performance and attainment of estimated results.

The evaluation used a **non-experimental design**, whereby the vulnerable children and parents (the so-called “treatment groups”) are compared before and after the Project implementation. An experimental design, although more robust method, was impeded by the limited resources of this evaluation and thus by the difficulties to construct and assess ‘treatment’ and ‘control’ groups of reasonable numbers to mobilise the power of statistics. These constraints are indirectly acknowledged by the ToR (Section 7) which specifies that the evaluation should rely on a non-experimental design.

The design of the evaluation methodology combined a **Results-Based Management** with a **Human Rights-Based Approach** (HRBA) to programming and evaluation i.e. achievement of planned results through morally-acceptable processes to realise human rights, in particular children’s rights for this evaluation. The HRBA applied by the evaluation team was guided by five core principles: normativity, participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency, and by the Common Understanding on HRBA to Development Cooperation and Programming, approved by the United Nations Development Group in 2003:

- All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
- Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.
- Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of ‘duty bearers’ to meet their obligations and/or of ‘rights-holders’ to claim their rights.

This evaluation identified the “**rights holders**” of the Project as being vulnerable and excluded children and families, particularly children with disabilities and children without parental care.

The Evaluation assessed the extent to which the Project results (outcomes) contributed to the achievement of **children’s rights, equity and addressing gender sensitive issues**. In this respect, the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 5) included specific evaluation questions, as follows:

- Has the project actively contributed to the promotion of child rights?
- To what extent and how has the Project ensured an equity focus?
- To what extent and how has the project integrated gender equality into its design and implementation?

Attention was given to the evaluation of the **gender equality and mainstreaming** issues reflected by the Project, in line with Montenegro’s international commitments, most notably CEDAW and UNICEF Gender Policy (2010)³¹ which states that UNICEF aims to work with partners to pursue gender equality and the equal rights of girls and boys “to contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through results-oriented, effective and coordinated action that

³¹ UNICEF (2010), “Working for an Equal Future. UNICEF Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women”, New York

achieves the protection, survival and development of girls and boys on an equal basis.” The evaluation used to the extent possible disaggregated data by age, gender and disability.

Ethical dimensions of the Project design and implementation

The evaluation was so conceived to enable the analysis of how ethical the Project was as far as its initial design, respectively implementation were concerned. In this respect, the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 5) comprised specific questions, i.e.:

- Was the design of the Project ethical?
- How was the balance of cost and benefits to participants (including possible negative impact) considered during the Project implementation?

The section on Human Rights and cross-cutting issues of the evaluation report provides a detailed response to these questions, based on:

- judgement criteria, i.e. the design of the Project respects the highest ethical standards, human rights and gender equality are a priority in the overall Project budget and implementation, the benefits for participants outweigh the costs, and
- descriptors/indicators, i.e. evidence that ethical aspects have been considered and how, examples of priority given to human rights and gender equality in the budget and implementation of the Project, identified benefits and costs, analysis of balance between the two for participants,

specified in the Evaluation Matrix along with various sources of information. In addition, ethical issues are also considered in the relevance and efficiency sections of the report.

Ethical considerations related to the evaluation design

During data collection, attention was paid to ensuring that the evaluation process is ethical and that participants in the process can openly express their opinions, protecting the confidentiality of their answers. Overall, the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System (March, 2008) was strictly respected, notably independence of judgement, impartiality, honesty and integrity, accountability, respect and protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, confidentiality, avoidance of risks, harm to and burdens on those participating in the evaluation, accuracy, completeness and reliability of report, transparency. The evaluators were sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and acted with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders, ensured that their contacts with individuals were characterized by respect, protected the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information.

The process of recruiting stakeholders from different institutional levels followed a standard procedure in order to ensure an informed consent to participate in the evaluation (letter of introduction from UNICEF presenting the evaluation process, protection of privacy and information confidentiality, followed up by the evaluation team through written/verbal communication on the interview/focus group/discussion group details). Participation in the evaluation was voluntary and opinions were presented in the report in an anonymous manner.

Selection of parents (final beneficiaries) for the focus groups was done in cooperation with the CSWs and DCCs in the visited municipalities. Parents were informed about the scope of the focus group and its main discussion topics. Parents' consent to participate was secured. The participation of children (final beneficiaries) in the data collection process was ensured through UNICEF country office (focus group with children who participated in the Project campaign) and based on prior consent of parents

as well as through the management of Children's Home 'Mladost' (focus groups with girls and boys living in 'Mladost').

Children were informed about the scope and themes of the discussion. Before starting the focus group, the evaluators explained again the purpose of the discussion, the way their opinion will be processed ensuring the confidentiality. They were also asked to confirm their consent. Children were informed that they can withdraw anytime during the focus group without any obligation to explain the reasons.

Throughout the process, the evaluation was in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards

Involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation

Involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation is of utmost importance for the collection of vital data and critical insights, but also for validating findings and conclusions as well as checking the feasibility of recommendations while ensuring buy-in. The evaluation was so designed to ensure the involvement of stakeholders at three levels: **information, consultation and participation**, depending on the nature of each stakeholder and engagement in the Project.

In total, a number of 135 people have been involved during the evaluation, representing the key stakeholders of the Project: target groups, final beneficiaries (children and their families), implementing partners, donor, oversight bodies, parliament, civil society organisations, as detailed in Table 2, first column, above.

Interviews, focus groups and discussion groups were used for: a) data collection; b) qualitative insights from stakeholders; c) direct participation of stakeholders in the analysis and evaluation of the Project results and impact; and d) checking the perceived priorities for the continuation of the child care reforms in Montenegro by the key stakeholders and the role each of them will have to play in the future. In this respect, specific questions have been included in the Interview Guides (Annex 6) to capture the various perspectives of a large range of stakeholders. This was very useful for informing the recommendations of the evaluation based on an open and participatory process initiated during the Field Phase and continued during the presentation of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations on 4 July 2014. The evaluation results were sent to all key stakeholders in advance to ensure an informed discussion and buy-in. Their feedback has been fully incorporated in this final version of the evaluation report.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

3.1 Relevance

Evaluation of Project relevance was based on the following evaluation questions:

This To what extent are the Project design and its objectives relevant for national policies and strategies as well as for international commitments of Montenegro?
To what extent has the Project addressed underlying causes of exclusion and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable target groups (children deprived of parental care, children with disabilities and other vulnerable children and their families)?
To what extent is the Project design relevant vis-à-vis the overall Project goal and the achievement of its purpose in the given period of time?
How flexible was the Project design and activities in adapting to the changing environment (impact of the economic crisis, etc.) and emerging needs?

The relevance of the Project has been assessed using available data, facts and statistics for year 2011 when the Project started as well as relevant legal and strategic documents of the Government, Montenegro's international commitments to comply with human rights standards and UNICEF strategies in the country. Interviews with key stakeholders were also used to triangulate findings. The basic shortcomings in the area of child protection have been already presented in Chapter 1 and they were also highlighted in a number of reports, studies, assessments and researches of Government partners, Ombudsman, UNICEF and NGOs.

As mentioned in various independent assessments, the policy and legal framework in Montenegro provided legal space for institutionalisation. Analysis identified that **the Project was in accordance with the needs and priorities identified in Montenegro's strategies and laws aimed to guide and advance the realisation of children's rights and child protection reforms**. In this respect, the Project has most notably addressed the need for child deinstitutionalisation and prevention of child abandonment through inter-sectoral cooperation. The Project has included in its design technical assistance for the revision and development of legal framework, introduction of transformation models for residential institutions as well as adoption of new approaches for gatekeeping and development of new family and community-based services for child protection. At policy level, the Project responded to the need of MoLSW, MoH and MoE to strengthen their cooperation in the implementation of integrated approaches for the prevention of child institutionalisation.

The revision of the legal framework and particularly the adoption of the new Law on Social and Child Protection (2013) and related secondary legislation required introduction of new quality standards and working procedures, as well as a reconfiguration of the cadre of professionals equipped with adequate information, knowledge, skills and attitudes to implement the reform. The Project was so designed to support the government, key duty-bearer, to implement this crucial law by developing the capacity of professionals working in the child protection system, service providers and key national and local institutional stakeholders to better perform their role and responsibilities deriving from the legal framework and use of new working procedures (e.g. introduction of Individual Plan of Action for each child in social care). By promoting the respect for human rights, the best interest of the child, equal access to services and participation of beneficiaries, the Project was in line with the principles of the social and child welfare reform as specified in the Strategy for Social and Child Welfare 2008-2012, chapter 4. The objectives of the Strategy to develop services that sustain living in the community and introduce quality system in child welfare have been also guiding the implementation of the Project.

The Project was fully in line with international human rights standards ratified by Montenegro, specifically with the UNCRC – see box 1 below; the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) - by providing support for the transformation of Public Institution 'Komanski Most'

(closed institution under the National Preventative Mechanism) and capacity building of staff for new roles; and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – by contributing to the inclusion in regular education of children with special education needs and increasing access to day care centres of children with disabilities.

Box 1. Response of the Project to CRC Concluding Observations for Montenegro, 2010

- **CRC Recommendation:** Continue to harmonize national legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention, by fully incorporating the Convention into the existent laws, including the Law on Child and Social protection
***Project Response:** technical assistance for the development and adoption of a new Law on Social and Child Protection (2013), harmonised with the CRC particularly as concerns the approach to institutional placement as a measure of last resort, as well as connected by-laws and quality standards; training of professionals for the implementation of new legal provisions; support for the development of new services aimed to prevent child abandonment and institutionalisation.*
- **CRC Recommendation:** Establish, with the support of all relevant partners including UNICEF, a consolidated system for the comprehensive collection and analysis of disaggregated data, in order to effectively analyse, monitor and assess the impact of laws, policies and programmes
***Project Response:** development and introduction of national and local databases on child protection at the MoLSW, respectively at CSWs levels; provision of software and training for proper functioning; development of child protection indicators*
- **CRC Recommendation:** Further strengthen adequate and systematic training of all professional groups working for and with children, including teachers, health personnel, social workers and personnel of childcare institutions
***Project Response:** delivery of a large number of training courses to professionals working in the social protection, education and health sectors at national and local levels, including professionals from CSOs*
- **CRC Recommendation:** Ensure consultation with civil society in the design of legislation, policies and programmes in all areas concerning children
***Project Response:** the new legislation and policy framework have been designed based on a large consultation and participation process, involving the CSOs in the various working groups which developed the new law, rulebooks, quality standards, the new strategy on fostering, etc.*
- **CRC Recommendations:** Develop community-based and family-focused services. Strengthen social services providing family counselling and train professionals, including social workers providing assistance to parents in the upbringing of their children
***Project Response:** development of foster care services, day care centres and small group homes, provision of a complex training programme on family counselling and certification of a number of CSWs staff members*
- **CRC Recommendations:** Review policies to prevent the placement of children in institutions and reduce the number of children in institutions. Raise public awareness about the negative impact of institutionalization on a child's development
***Project Response:** support the adoption of new legal and policy framework as well as transformation plans which promote deinstitutionalisation of children from 'Komanski Most' Institute and Children's home 'Mladost' (target institutions of the Project); implementation of a national awareness raising campaign "Every Child Needs a Family" (as awareness about children in institutions, inclusion of children with disabilities, fostering and adoption was generally low, as per Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices - KAP survey in 2009)*
- **CRC Recommendations:** Expand the network of Day Care Centers for Children with Disabilities who cannot be integrated into the regular educational system. Provide training for professional staff working with children with disabilities, such as teachers, social workers and medical, paramedical and related personnel. Continue its efforts to include children with disabilities in the general school system
***Project Response:** technical assistance and training for the setting up of new DCCs to cover the needs of children with disabilities and their families; training of members of COCSENs for better assessment of children and integration into regular schooling as far as possible.*

Source: Based on Committee on the Rights of the Child (2010), "Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Montenegro", Fifty-fifth session, CRC/C/MNE/CO/1

Supporting the national stakeholders to revise the legislation and ban the institutionalisation of children 0-3 was in accordance with the obligations that the Government of Montenegro has committed to at the regional Ministerial Conference 'Ending placement of children under three in institutions: support nurturing families for all young children', held in November 2012 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The Project is fully in line with the National Programme of Integration 2008-2012, as confirmed by the NIPAC and it contributed to addressing the important political criterion for Montenegro's EU accession process. The EC progress reports for Montenegro issued in 2010 and 2011 raise concern in relation to the lack of harmonisation of the law on child and social protection with CRC, inadequacy of the national plan for children, discrimination of children with disability in 'Komanski Most' Institute, poor alternatives to institutionalisation, such as foster or community-based care, insufficient access of children with mental disability to education. "An overall multi-sectoral reform of the child and social protection system, in line with UNICEF standards, is needed" (European Commission, 2010)³². The Project has addressed all these concerns by establishing the building blocks of the reform in various areas of the child protection system (legal, policy, institutional, working practices, services, etc.), at central and local level. The Project approach to reform is consistent with the key principles of EU best practice for the design and modernisation of social inclusion services³³.

The Project was relevant for the priorities of UNICEF in Montenegro, which provided assistance to the MoLSW for the implementation of the Project, **as highlighted in the Country Programme Action Plan 2012-2016** (outcome 1, outputs 1.1 – deinstitutionalisation, family and community-based care, CSWs, 1.4 – community-based services for children with disability; outcome 2, output 2.1 – legal and policy framework, 2.2 – local planning). UNICEF is seen by the Project stakeholders as best positioned to advocate and promote the children's rights. Feedback received by the evaluation team depicts UNICEF as *"reliable", "valuable, serious partner", "pushing the reforms", "best placed to support the Government in the implementation of child care reform in the country"*. It is also popular among the children met during the site visits and interviewed on the occasion of the focus groups.

The Project was relevant to the needs of vulnerable children (children without parental care, children with disability, children in institutions), as rights-holders and their families (both duty-bearers and rights-holders), as it was designed on the basis of in-depth children's needs assessments and studies (e.g. study on social inclusion and preparation for 2010 IPA – 2010; strategic review of the system of caring for vulnerable children – 2010; assessment of health services for prevention of baby abandonment/relinquishment - 2011, etc.). As concluded by a key informant, *"Reform of this system was very much needed to advance the understanding of best interest of the child"*, indicating the shared opinion of stakeholders consulted for the purpose of this evaluation that the reform of child protection was due and that it needs to continue. Relevance has been enhanced by the systematic use of consultations and engagement of a large spectrum of stakeholders in Project implementation: central and local, public and non-governmental, decision makers and operational staff, professionals, parents, media and, to a certain extent, children.

An important part of the Project targeted children under the age of three at risk of being abandoned by their parents due to difficult life situation. In this respect, the Project strengthened inter-sectoral

³² European Commission (2010), "Commission Opinion on Montenegro's application for membership of the European", Analytical Report, COM(2010) 670, Brussels, page 28

³³ Needs led services; Decentralised services; A mixed market of service providers; Effective and efficient services; Transparent and accountable services; High quality services; Learning systems of services (drawing on best practice); Flexible services. Based on Horne, C. (2010), "Study on Social Inclusion and Preparation for 2010 IPA".

cooperation between health, education and social welfare for putting in place early detection of risk and prevention of child abandonment. The selection of vulnerable children under the age of three as final beneficiaries of the Project was a correct and most relevant decision for the needs of these vulnerable group as life of children abandoned by their mother right after the birth or at early age is of a great concern. Research demonstrated that young children who are institutionalised for more than six months suffer long-term developmental delay. It also shows that the probability for children under the age of three of losing parental care is much higher than for children of other ages³⁴. Another highly relevant part of the Project targeted children with disabilities who face discrimination, high risk of family separation³⁵, poor access to social services and are in general socially marginalised, by increasing access to specialised services and regular education. Feedback from interviews and focus groups indicates that it was the parents of children with disabilities who have demanded the opening of DCCs as crucial service for children that cannot enrol in regular education or in the special schools due to their health/developmental status. The Project was also relevant for the needs of children living in institutions in terms of supporting the development of alternative care solutions for their deinstitutionalisation, including improvement of contacts with their parents for family reunification and fostering. In line with its systemic approach, the Project has responded to the needs of vulnerable children and their families by strengthening the capacities of professionals in the field of social protection, health and education sectors³⁶. Based on training evaluations, feedback from trainers and information provided by key informants of this evaluation, the relevance of training topics was good, as curricula were based on prior analyses of the system, and it could have been even better in case more thorough training needs assessments were carried out before each training course to adapt the training to the knowledge and experience of each learning group.

The Project is the result of a collaborative effort of the MoLSW and UNICEF. **The Project is logically linked with the other two components of the overall IPA 2011 Social Inclusion and had a design which allowed concrete contribution to the attainment of the overall goal of facilitating inclusion of vulnerable, socially-excluded groups through the social welfare and education systems.** The Project design is also relevant for its purpose of “enhancing access to comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable family and community-based services as an alternative to institutionalization of vulnerable children”. The Logical Framework is of good quality with a clearly formulated intervention logic which aims at strengthening social inclusion of vulnerable children and their families through both a top-down and bottom-up approach. Activities are divided under three components, which are logically linked to the results and enable the project to deliver the planned outputs. The purpose of the Project is however fairly ambitious for the given time frame. As several key informants at central level put it: *“We agreed to the transformations, but we were very concerned about the deadlines”, “Everything to be done at the same time is not possible, we need to prioritise”*. Similar feelings are shared by different stakeholders at local level, revealing a sense of insecurity with *“too many changes”* and concerns for their insufficient grasp of reform and positioning for new roles. Although commendable for pushing the reform forward and tackling the system in its complexity, too fast processes of change occurring simultaneously in many areas and which do not allow sufficient time to be absorbed by the system may risk creating dependency on technical assistance and burn-out of professionals who are at the core of reform. Hence the strongly perceived need for prioritising and transition period for coping with novelties of the system and alignment with international standards.

³⁴ See, for instance, Palayret, G. (2012), “Children Under the Age of Three in Formal Care in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. A Rights-Based Regional Situation Analysis”, UNICEF

³⁵ “Children and young people with disabilities represent one of the most vulnerable groups in Montenegro, where approximately 200 children with disabilities are separated from their families year-round or most of the year by being placed in various institutions for education or social protection” (UNICEF Montenegro Country Office (2012), “Annual Progress Report 2011, page 24)

³⁶ According to Zegarac, N. (2011), only one out of three employees (32.4%) of the total staff of CSWs were trained to provide direct support to the beneficiaries in 2011.

The Project was flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances in the country, at national and local level. The decision-making structures, particularly the Project Steering Committee, provided the Project with substantial flexibility in order to cope with the pace of the reform and emerging needs of the child care system. The Logical Framework was amended following the Mid-term evaluation, some budget reallocations were approved (i.e. from grants based on calls for proposals to rehabilitation of the DCC in Podgorica where most of children with disability and special needs live and to more training of professionals) and a no-cost extension of the Project was granted by the EUD in order to respond to the developments in the field in the most effective manner and reach more tangible and significant final result. The MoLSW, assisted by UNICEF, and in partnership with the members of the PSC have successfully identified remedial or alternative ways of coping with emerging challenges while keeping the Project relevant in time. Indeed, the Project faced obstacles in the implementation, mainly grounded in the public resistance towards introduction of new services for children with disabilities (i.e. small group home in Danilovgrad) just before the project started, delays caused by lengthy revision of the legal framework and the adoption of the new Law on Social and Child Protection, low capacity of CSWs and residential institutions to take on the reform in a rather short time frame. At the same time, the Project was able to respond to additional requests for assistance from the Government, for instance for the development of the Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System 2013-2017 (adopted in 2013), assessment of support and prevention mechanisms in health institutions (2011), fiscal analysis to support the adoption of the new law (2012), more training and monitoring assistance than planned for the COCSEs, revision of individual action plans of Montenegrin children residing in Serbian institutions.

It is important to mention that overall **the Project remained relevant in time**, as demonstrated by several reports, policy documents and strategies adopted or under implementation during its lifetime. A revealing example is presented in Box 2 below, with highlights of areas of Project compatibility with two major strategic documents adopted by the country in 2013.

Box 2. Areas of Compatibility between the Project and Strategic Papers

Strategy for the Development of Social and Child Welfare 2013-2017:

*“Placement in the institution is a service provided to the beneficiary in a manner allowing the **preparation for return to biological family, placement in other family and preparation for independent living.**”* (page 16)

*“Particularly important for efficiency of material incentives is **the setting up of data bases**, notably in the social and child protection system, (...)”* (page 17)

“The quality service provision requires:

- 1) development of **minimal standards** for social and child protection services;*
- 2) development of **diversified services** reproducing a family environment for beneficiary as least restrictive as possible* (page 18)

*“For carrying out development, counselling, research and other expert activities in social and child protection and strengthening of professional capacities of employees and service providers, it is extremely important to set up the **Institute for social and child protection**”* (page 19)

National Action Plan for Children 2014-2017:

*“Structure of employees in centres is unsuitable, only one in three employees of CSW being skilled for working directly with beneficiaries for service provision... With the aim of addressing this issue, new **organisation of work is planned, development of standards and introduction of working procedures of centres of social work that would increase efficiency.** Also, **case management methodology is planned.**”* (page 41)

*“Development of programme for **prevention of institutionalisation of children.** Indicators: Until the end of 2017, **transformed Home for children in Bijela.** Until the end of 2017, at least 4 **small group homes** for children without parental care set up that are sustainable in the future.”* (specific goal 4.2, page 45)

“Development and expansion of alternative forms of care and support for children with developmental needs and their families: day care centres for children with developmental needs and small group homes. Indicators: Until the end of 2017, increased number of day care centres for children with developmental needs that satisfy adopted standards and DCC functioning in at least half of Montenegrin municipalities (11). Until the end of 2017, at least 4 small group homes for children without parental care set up that are sustainable in future.” (specific goal 4.3, page 46)

The findings of various studies and analyses carried out during the implementation of the Project also indicate that it remained relevant in time, i.e. UNICEF (2012), “Child Poverty in Montenegro”, Podgorica; European Commission (2013), “Montenegro 2013 Progress Report”, COM(2013) 700 final, Brussels; Zegarac, N. (2014), “The child’s right to quality care - Review of the implementation of the United Nations Guidelines for the alternative care of children in Western Balkan countries”, Save the Children International, Sarajevo, etc. Since the Project is intimately embedded in the reform efforts of the country, its relevance in time is also reflected in the continuation of IPA support (Bridging and IPA II) for strengthening its achievements and advancing the reform, which was prioritised by all key informants for this evaluation, and particularly stressed as commitment from Government, EUD and UNICEF.

3.2 Effectiveness

Evaluation of Project effectiveness considered the following evaluation questions:

Have the planned results been achieved to date (quantitative and qualitative)?
To what extent and how has the Project contributed to creating a coherent legislative and policy framework?
To what extent and how has the Project contributed to the establishment of quality social and child protection services for the most vulnerable groups?
To what extent has the Project contributed to strengthening capacities of: social and child protection professionals to manage the reform process?; of service providers to provide quality assistance to the most vulnerable groups in line with national and international standards?
To what extent has the Project contributed to strengthening monitoring and reporting capacities of social welfare system as they relate to child-care reform?
What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the Project objectives to date?
Has the project provided any additional (not directly planned by the Project) significant contribution/ outcomes towards development of family and community based services and social inclusion of most vulnerable and excluded children?

According to the ToC, the Project envisaged to achieve four outcomes ³⁷ and eleven outputs which were assessed by the evaluation team and results presented below. A full overview of the indicators, baselines, targets and achievements is presented in Annex 8.

Outcome 1: The Child Protection System has a policy and legal framework harmonized with international standards and the Institute for Social Welfare is established to standardize and ensure quality child care services

This outcome has been partially achieved to date (May 2014), as illustrated by Table 7 which presents the achieved level of the targets associated with five indicators.

³⁷ The DoA and Logframe mention three results, which are transposed in four results in the ToC, keeping the initial meaning and spirit of the initial design documents. As the ToR formulates the evaluation questions, particularly those linked to the impact, following the logic of the ToC, the evaluation report uses the ToC as the main reference document, however specifying differences with the Logframe when these are significant.

Table 7. Achievement of Outcome 1 Indicators

Outcome 1 indicators (ToC)	Baseline	Target	Achieved (%)*
Law on Social and Child Protection adopted and compliant with international standards	No	Yes	Achieved (100%)
Secondary legislation for the Law on Social and Child Protection including Child Protection Standards adopted by July 2014	0	5	Partially achieved (3 by-laws = 60%), work in progress
The Institute for Social Welfare officially established and functional by 2014	No	Yes	Partially achieved (50%)
Local and national Child Protection Database created and operational by the end of 2012	No	Yes	Achieved (100%)
Number of municipalities with support provided for Local Plans of Action for children by July 2014	0 (through IPA)	5	Over achieved (6 municipalities = 120%)

* By 20 May 2014

A new Law on Social and Child Protection has been adopted in May 2013, based on a participatory and inclusive process coordinated by the MoLSW, as key national duty bearer, with the strategic guidance of UNICEF, involving professionals from various ministries and governmental bodies, CSWs, service providers (including residential care institutions), NGOs, national and international consultants. It has been also the subject to public debate in four occasions. **The law is considered by various stakeholders consulted during the evaluation process to be generally compliant with the international standards:** prevention of institutionalization and access to services in the least restrictive environment are listed among the principles of social and child protection; it introduces a pluralistic approach to child protection; it defines institutional placement as a measure of last resort. **The Law prohibits institutional placement of children aged 0-3 (art.70); still, placement in institution is possible if there are no other protection alternatives available upon the approval of the MoLSW.** This loophole in the law calls for urgent development of family support services, foster care and other forms of alternative care to prevent misuse of this legal clause and institutionalisation on the grounds of lack of services.

The work on the law has been done in parallel with the development of secondary legislation. Until May 2014, three by-laws have been adopted on: the organization, norms, standards and methods of work of CSW; professional activities in the social welfare and child care system; and foster care. The remaining 2 by-laws on minimum standards of shelters and of residential care for children and young people, which the Project envisaged to support, were in various stages of preparation at the time of the field phase of the evaluation. It is important to mention that the adoption of quality standards will contribute to ensuring a uniform quality of service provision across the country as well as to the transparency of eligibility criteria and definitions of what a citizen can expect with regard to social and child protection for her/his need. **Attention was paid to ensuring the required level of synergy and coherence of new law and by-laws with relevant policies, strategies and plans in the country,** such as between the Law on Social and Child Protection (2013) and the National Action Plan for Children 2014-2017 or between the by-law on foster care and the Strategy for the Development of Fostering 2012-2016.

Overall, the support provided by the Project for the revision and modernization of the policy and legal framework (international technical expertise in developing drafts, fiscal analysis of the implications of the law, critical reviews, recommendations for improvement, participation of Project consultants in the working groups) has been highly appreciated by the national stakeholders and recommendations have been to a large extent taken into account. **A key facilitating factor for the modernization of the**

policy and legal framework and progress in the implementation of the Project is the EU accession process of Montenegro which drives the policy agenda in the country.

There have nevertheless been few instances when the prepared rulebooks were cut short in the adopted by-laws, apparently due to the **insufficient capacity of the legal department of the MoLSW or rigid attitudes of the Secretariat for Legislation of the Government to reflect the novelties of the new law in the rulebooks**, as reported by several key informants consulted for this evaluation. In this respect, the Project has undertaken remedial actions, such as in the case of the rulebook on foster care, for which it was agreed with the MoLSW (social and child protection department) to develop guidelines for professionals to help them implement the provisions of the rulebook based on international standards on the matter and a guide for foster carers for quality assurance. Both documents are expected to be finalised by the end of the Project.

As far as the Institute for Social and Child Protection is concerned, the related indicator has been only partially achieved until May 2014. Preparations for its establishment have been done, but there are little chances that the Institute will be functional until the end of the Project. After long negotiations with the Ministry of Finance which opposed the setting up of the Institute due to the economic crisis and funding cuts in the public administration, the MoLSW, assisted by UNICEF and supported by the EUD, has managed to include in the new law the establishment of an Institute for Social and Child Protection (art.120 and 121). According to the MoLSW top officials who were interviewed for this evaluation, funding for salaries for 14 staff members and other functioning costs have been already allocated in the ministry's budget. The premises have been identified and endowed by the Project. A draft document on the establishment of the Institute (objectives, structure, organisation, etc.) has been prepared during the Project. However, recruitment and selection of staff has been delayed due to the elections in May 2014, as the law forbids any employment of staff during two months before and one month after the elections. According to the usual time taken by the National Human Resources Authority for a recruitment process (the Government body in charge of the recruitment and selection of civil servants), it is unlikely that the staff will be employed, trained and ready to function earlier than September 2014. i.e. after the end of the Project. Such delays have been mainly caused by the late adoption of the new law, in May 2013 compared to 2012, as initially planned in the Project Logframe. It is important to mention that these delays were outside the control of the Project. **Once established and functional, the Institute will cover an important gap of the system in so far as it will be in charge of the licencing of social professionals, accreditation of training programmes, monitoring and supervision of professional work at the level of CSWs and general quality assurance through monitoring the observance of quality standards by the service providers, provision of systematic continuous training to professionals, associates and service providers** (which at the moment is rather ad hoc and disconnected from learning priorities).

The indicator on developing and introducing a Child Protection Database, linking the MoLSW at national level with all CSWs at local level based, has been fully achieved. The database links the MoLSW with all CSWs. It has been in use since January 2013 and includes around 18,000 entries. Based on these entries, the MoLSW is able to calculate 50 indicators at national level and get quick information on: a) child poverty and financial allowances; b) children in the child protection system (based on the reason for entering the system); c) professionals, services and service providers; and d) intersectoral indicators (education and health). **It is for the first time when the child protection system in Montenegro benefits of such a comprehensive, electronic database which provides a consistent picture of needs (as CSWs collect and register data in a uniform way) and allows aggregation of data, evidence-based monitoring and analysis at national level of existing situation, particular vulnerability profiles, trends, with a great potential for informing policy making (planning, budgeting, coverage of gaps, etc.) at national level.** The training provided by

the Project for the use of the software and database improved the competences of the MoLSW for the monitoring and supervision of the work of CSWs and service provision for vulnerable children. Arising issues are discussed each month during the regular meetings of the Ministry with colleagues from CSWs. Once the Institute of Social and Child Protection is set up, the function of monitoring, quality assurance and supervision of professionals will be taken over from the MoLSW, enabling the Ministry to primarily focus on strategic priorities and decision-making. The database and the associated training has also increased the level of knowledge, skills and abilities of the CSWs to collect data and monitor the individual social cases based on comprehensive and up-to-date information. In addition, the mapping of the child protection services at local, regional and national level carried out by the Project in 2013 is another key instrument for planning and monitoring of development of social services. **The Project has thus covered an important information gap, responding to the concerns and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child** (see section on Relevance).

There are however two aspects which require attention in the future. The first relates to the list of indicators whose level of disaggregation is not always optimal. For instance, the section on service providers includes information only on the number of licensed providers, without disaggregation per legal status (public/private/NGO), type of service provided (e.g. family counselling, day care, residential care, home support, respite care, etc.), beneficiaries (e.g. age, disability, **gender**, etc.), location (urban/rural). **The second refers to the insufficient use of the database by the CSWs for decision-making.** The site visits at the CSWs and the interviews with the managers and staff of several centres indicate that the database is used mainly for recording entries and updates and for monitoring individual cases, but not for retrieving aggregated data for decision-making. No training was provided to the CSWs on using the software for this purpose, hence the inclusion of specific trainings for managers and staff in the up-coming EU Bridging support.

A final indicator related to outcome 1 is the number of municipalities which received support for the Local Plans of Action for children by the end of the Project³⁸. **This indicator has been achieved, since 6 municipalities benefitted of support for the development of the plan (Cetinje) and for its promotion (Bijelo Polje, Bar, Rozaje, Kotor, Ulcinj).** The feedback received from the discussion group in Cetinje indicates that the plan, addressing 2,998 children living in the municipality, has been done in a highly participative manner and that it has already started its implementation, registering its initial results, such as the setting up of a Children's Parliament, the provision of transportation to school of children from rural areas, the establishment of a DCC, etc.

Outcome 2: Capacities of organizations and individuals working in child protection system are enhanced

This outcome has been almost entirely achieved until May 2014, as indicated by its six indicators set in the ToC and the revised Logframe to measure the achievements (see Table 8).

³⁸ The corresponding indicator in the initial Logframe of the Project was "At least 10 Local Plans of Action for social and child protection developed by end 2012". Following recommendation of the mid-term Project evaluation (2012) to review and adjust measures and expectations in the light of experience and understanding acquired during implementation to date, the indicator has been rephrased, being in its final formulation limited to only 5 municipalities and only to generic 'support' instead of 'development'. According to UNICEF, LPAs were part of the usual work of the office and there was no need to include them in this Project as well. Nevertheless, the plans were considered to be very useful and it would have been beneficial to keep the indicator as in its initial formulation: "LPAs for Children have proved to be very useful instruments which have helped to streamline and synchronize local policies pertaining to children and most importantly to engage all relevant sectors, local community and children in policy planning and implementation". (Progress Report 2011, page 17)

Table 8. Achievement of Outcome 2 Indicators

Outcome 2 indicators (ToC)	Baseline	Target	Achieved (%)*
Protocol of inter-ministerial cooperation formalised by the end of 2013	No	Yes	Achieved (100%)
Number of health workers with increased knowledge on prevention of baby abandonment in maternity wards	0	50	Over achieved (54 people = 108%)
Number of children with special educational needs assessed by Commissions for Orientation of Children with Special Educational Needs increased by 100% by July 2014 ³⁹	654	1,308 (100% increase)	Over achieved (1,350 children = 103%)
10% of professional workforce in centers for social work trained on family counselling and received certificates by the end of 2013	0%	10%	Over achieved (18 professionals = 111%)
Number of certified CSW professionals with advanced knowledge on fostering	0	20	Over achieved (23 professionals = 115%)
Case management piloted in at least 2 centres for social work by the end of 2014	No	Yes	Partially achieved

* By 20 May 2014

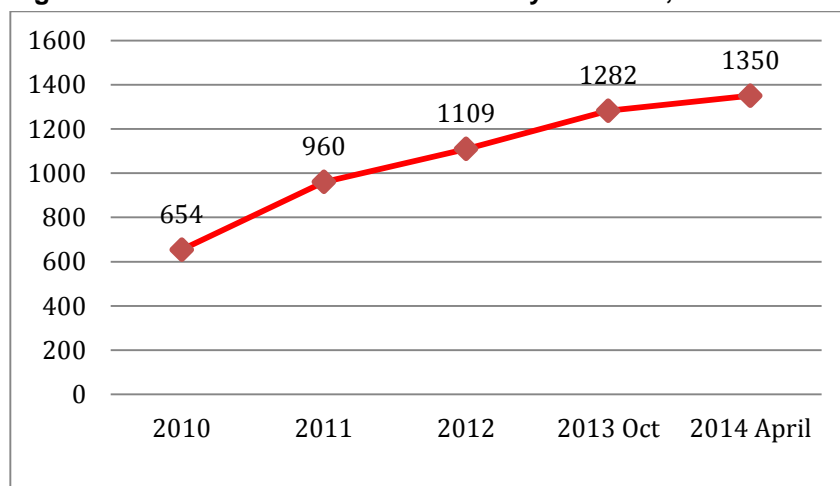
Under this outcome, a **Protocol for inter-sectoral cooperation aimed to prevent child abandonment was signed by the MoLSW, MoH and MoE in April 2014, as an expression of commitment to undertake all necessary measures to prevent institutionalization, engage in transformation of existing institutions and improve quality of services and programmes for children.** The Protocol sets out the responsibilities of professionals working in these sectors and action algorithm with respect to early detection of vulnerable parents, counselling of parents in need and provision of support packages (both material and psychological). The feedback received from focus groups with professionals working in CSWs, residential institutions and NGOs as well as interviews with representatives of ministries and various service providers confirms that the Protocol is a major step forward in prevention of child abandonment and, generally, in strengthening the needed inter-sectoral cooperation. It is however felt that more precision is needed to ensure a unitary implementation of the Protocol across the country, hence the request of professionals for complementary/additional guidelines.

The prerequisites for the implementation of the Protocol were built by joint training courses (39 training hours in total) organised in 2012 for around 100 professionals representing the education, health (54 general practitioners, gynaecologists, nurses) and social protection sectors at national and local level, based on the needs identified in several studies and analyses commissioned by the Project one year before, most notably the analysis and assessment of health services related to the prevention of baby abandonment/ relinquishment and the assessment of CSWs (2011). **According to various key informants interviewed for this evaluation, the Project introduced new ways of thinking in the health sector. Health workers are more aware of their 'social' role, more able to recognise the social risk and better networked with colleagues from other sectors.** It would be useful to follow the evolution of the child abandonment rate in the coming years to check the utility of Inter-sectoral Protocol and of the training on prevention of baby abandonment in order to take corrective measures if need be.

³⁹ The formulation of the indicator in the initial Logframe was "Number of socially excluded children accessing formal education increased by 25% by end 2012". Following the mid-term Project evaluation (2012), the indicator has been reformulated as "Number of children with special educational needs assessed by Commissions for Orientation of Children with Special Educational Needs increased by 100% by July 2014", to reflect better the support provided by the Project for the strengthening of COCSENs. In its initial formulation, the indicator would have been more appropriate for the first component of the IPA 2010 Social Inclusion Project i.e. "Inclusive education services" rather than for the component three "Child Care System Reform".

Intersectoral cooperation is also needed in the case of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) for their orientation towards the best education programme and support service. In this respect, **the Project has strengthened the capacity of COCSEN⁴⁰ to perform a more efficient job through on-the-job consultancy provided during 36 monitoring visits of experts as well as through training to improve communication with parents and orientation of children with autism.** A number of 108 members of commissions benefitted of capacity building support. As a result, the number of children with SEN assessed by COCSEN has more than doubled, from 654 in 2010 to 1,350 in April 2014 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of Children assessed by COCSEN, 2010-2014



Source: Project data

The evaluation team has requested the MoE to provide disaggregated data on the orientation decisions taken by COCSEN i.e. orientation to regular education, special education or DCCs, and their follow up i.e. how many children were actually enrolled in regular education and for how long, have parents requested a re-evaluation, how many and why, have children oriented to regular education needed to be reoriented to special education, gender disaggregation, etc. These data would have facilitated a more thorough analysis of the quality of COCSEN's work and their partners (schools, DCCs, other social welfare provisions, etc.), apart from simply noting the increase in the number of assessed children. Unfortunately no data have been received from the MoE until the submission of the evaluation report.

The CSWs stay at the core of reform of social and child protection system and are important duty bearers. There are 18,000 beneficiary children registered in the database of CSW, with various vulnerability profiles. **In order to cope with reform challenges and serve as well as possible their beneficiaries, the staff of CSWs has benefitted of a large capacity building support from the Project** in the form of training on prevention of child abandonment (29 professionals, jointly with education and health professionals), use of child protection database (49 professionals), foster care (61 professionals), training of trainers for foster families (23 professionals) and family counselling⁴¹ (19 professionals), the last two resulting in 23⁴², respectively 18 certified professionals. In total, over 330 training hours have been delivered to the CSWs staff members. According to the Strategy for the

⁴⁰ Inter-sectoral mechanism functioning in 18 municipalities under the MoE in charge of assessing the child with special educational needs and orienting him/her to adequate educational programme by referral to an educational institution or DCC.

⁴¹ Based on the training standards of the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) and European Family Therapy Association (EFTA).

⁴² According to the Strategy for the Development of Fostering 2012-2016, a number of 25 trainers are needed for the training of foster carers, so the Project has almost cover this need with 25 certified professionals (23 from CSWs and 2 from the MoLSW)

Development of Fostering in Montenegro 2012-2016, 50 trained professionals are needed in the CSWs to apply new standards in fostering and 25 trainers for the training of foster carers. The Project has entirely covered this need by training 61 professionals in foster care and certifying 25 professionals (23 from CSW and 2 from the MoLSW) as trainers for foster families.

Interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders indicate that, as a result, **CSWs have a more knowledgeable and serious approach towards fostering, are more pro-active and open to work in partnership with colleagues from other sectors and with NGOs and thus faster in referral of children to relevant services.** Most importantly, the capacity building actions, on the background of new legal provisions, rulebooks and standards, had a major contribution to the change of mindsets and consequently of attitudes and work practices: **in the past, the CSWs staff believed that institutionalisation is the best option for children left without parental care, a belief which has been reversed with the contribution of the Project.** Increase in the use of fostering, including non-kinship foster care, and progress in deinstitutionalisation of children are promising indicators that work practices have started to change for the better.

Piloting of case management in two CSWs, which is one of outcome indicators, was replaced by basic and advanced training courses for 20 professionals to be delivered in May-July 2014. This change in approach was due to the late approval of the new Law in 2013 and of the by-law on CSW which regulated the case management as well as the current process of systematization of workplaces in the CSWs which will last until the end of September 2014. It was therefore inopportune to pilot case management in the CSWs before the finalisation of this process. As a result, **delivery of training courses to social workers from various CSWs as “champions of change” has been used as an alternative solution to introducing the case management methodology to a certain extent until the systematisation is finalised and the right prerequisites are in place.** No matter the way case management is finally introduced in the CSWs, it will be instrumental for ensuring an individual and integrated approach to the needs of each child within a multi-disciplinary context, using the new IT/database system, the mapping of child protection services done by the Project in 2013, the new quality standards and new working documents and procedures. In order to do that, **some barriers will need to be overcome, most notably the insufficient number of qualified social workers in the CSWs and overburdening of existing social workers with administration of social benefits to the detriment of frontline social work provision (planned to be addressed by the current systematisation process), resistance from older staff to change work practices and, very importantly, the insufficient development of community-based services for referring children in need and their families.**

Overall, **the Project provided 107 training days, totalling 700 training hours to a large range of professionals from various sectors, including NGOs, especially for those working at operational level.** A proportion of 82% (279 trainees) of the total number of participants⁴³ in the training courses delivered by the Project were women, indicating that the predominant staff of the social and child protection system is composed of women, rather than a gender promotion strategy of the Project (see more details in section 3.6). An overview of the training courses is provided in Annex 9. **Much less attention was given to enhancing the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the management of child protection system in order to support the managers better cope with child care reform challenges and manage the implementation process in a more efficient way,** an aspect which was acknowledged by the MoLSW, EUD and UNICEF and which will be addressed in the Bridging phase of EU support and IPA 2.

⁴³ To be noted that some trainees participated in 2 or more training courses. The figure refers to all participations, but the actual number of trainees is lower. The figure does not include the training organised by DCC Igalo (November 2012) and the capacity building monitoring visits to 18 COCSENs (May-July 2012), as reported data are not gender-disaggregated.

According to the feedback received from focus groups with professionals, the trainings were useful and practical, based on adopted or draft quality standards, delivered by excellent trainers who used appropriate, highly interactive training methodologies and which were based on good quality training materials and portfolios.

“Training was delivered in modules. These consisted of theoretical lectures, case presentations, DVD presentations, role plays of simulated situations, case reports, exercises in pairs and small groups and panel discussions. Three interconnected pillars were: Theoretical presentations, practical work and professional self-improvement. Special emphasis was placed on organizing small peer intervention groups, members were regionally joined. This was a novel activity which was welcomed and proved to be very important resource for trainees” (Final Report of the training on counselling of families at psychosocial risk, 2012, page 2)

Very appreciated was the diversity of forms used by the Project to strengthen capacities, by combining ‘classroom’ with on-the-job training, technical assistance, coaching and peer support. Toolkits, manuals and guidelines have been also developed and are currently used by practitioners.

Outcome 3: Availability and access to alternative family and community-based services for vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities increased

Based on the progress reached until May 2014 when the evaluation was done, outcome 3 has been partially achieved, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Achievement of Outcome 3 Indicators

Outcome 3 indicators (ToC)	Baseline	Target	Achieved (%)*
Regular (twice a year) revision of individual care plans for children in ‘Komanski Most’ in line with case management best practice	No	Yes	Achieved
Plan of Transformation of Institution for children without parental care “Mladost” adopted	No	Yes	Partially achieved (50%)
Number of Small Group homes established and operational by July 2014	0	2	Partially achieved (1 home built = 50%)
Number of Day Care Centres for Children and Youth with Disabilities established and operational	2	8	Achieved (100%)
Number of professional foster care families	5	20	Achieved (100%)

* By 20 May 2014

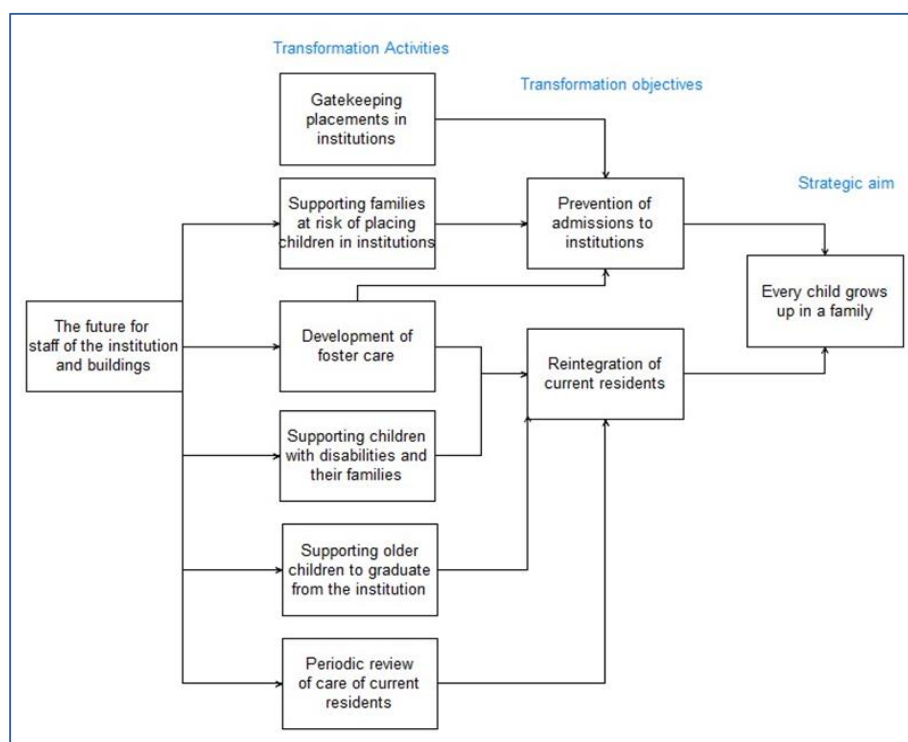
An important part of Project activities was targeting child deinstitutionalisation through planning the transformation of two main residential care institutions and staff training: ‘Komanski Most’ Institute for people with special needs (Podgorica) and Children’s Home ‘Mladost’ for children without parental care (Bijela, Herceg Novi municipality).

With the support of the Project, ‘Komanski Most’ Institute has developed a Plan of Transformation, aimed to contribute to the deinstitutionalisation of residing children. The plan was not formally adopted, but the management of institution and MoLSW, assisted by UNICEF, have implemented the plan of action through children’s individual care plans based on the prior comprehensive assessment of children. During the site visit to ‘Komanski Most’ Institute, the evaluation team reviewed several individual care plans. They are of good quality, well structured, with short-term (such as the development of cognitive and social abilities and the promotion of family contacts) and medium-term objectives (such as placement into a community-based group home or return to the family), including details on each action to be undertaken, therapeutic means to be used and the responsible person, implementation calendar and a brief summary of progress since the last revision.

The plans are revised each three to six months by the team in charge of the respective child, with the participation of UNICEF consultants, based on the principles of case management. **There is no evidence however of parents' involvement in the development and revision of the individual care plans.** According to the interview with the management and feedback from the focus group with the staff of 'Komanski Most' Institute, parents are very little engaged in the design, revision and implementation of the plan, although important efforts have been made over the last years to increase the contacts between children and parents, an aspect discussed in the impact section of the report.

The Project has also provided learning opportunities for the staff of Children's Home 'Mladost': around 90 hours of intersectoral training in child abandonment prevention and training in foster care. It also supported the development of an Operational Plan of Transformation of 'Mladost', aimed to contribute to the prevention of future admissions to the institution and reintegration of current residents to biological family, extended family, foster care, adoptive family or independent living. The plan is based on several previous documents that suggested various solutions for transformation: Lumos (2011), "Strategic Review of the system of caring for vulnerable children in Montenegro: Recommendations for the Reform of Health, Education and Social Services"; Djukanovic, B., Sovilj, S., Vukasovic, T. and Savic, M. (2012), "Draft Project for the transformation of PI Orphanage 'Mladost' Bijela" prepared by the MOLSW and staff of the institution; and Grujić, D. (2012), "An Opinion Concerning the Master Plan of Transformation of Child Protection Services - As Regards the Transformation of the Children's Home 'Mladost' Bijela". The final version of the Plan of Transformation is the result of a working group involving the key staff of the institution, MoLSW, CSW Pljevlja and UNICEF project team and international consultants in the period July 2013 - March 2014 and a workshop organised in March 2014. Strangely, the CSW in Herceg Novi, which covers Bijela where Children's Home 'Mladost' is located, has not been involved in this process, although CSWs are frequently mentioned among the 'Responsible actors' and "Sources of finance" for various planned services in the plan. The framework for implementation of the Operational Plan of Transformation (March 2014) is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Transformation Framework of Children's Home 'Mladost'



Source: Operational Plan of Transformation of 'Mladost' Institution, March 2014

The Operational Plan of Children's Home 'Mladost' includes a large menu of services: foster care, mother-and-baby shelter, 2 respite care facilities, home visiting support, day care centre for children with disability, 2 small group homes, support for semi-independent living. The basic assumption is that existing resources of the institution, primarily staff and buildings, could be used for developing these services to cover the needs of children, while avoiding unnecessary staff redundancies. For each foreseen service, the Operational Plan sets out indicators (progress and outcome), responsible actors, timeline, cost categories and sources of funding. Based on feedback received during the field phase of the evaluation, **there is a high level of ownership of the Plan in the 'Mladost' institution and a high degree of enthusiasm and commitment of the management team for putting it into practice.** The adoption of the Plan by the MoLSW is still pending. In general, **MoLSW stronger push is needed towards the deinstitutionalisation process.**

Following the review of the Operational Plan, the evaluation team has identified some areas of concern, especially in relation to the lack of prioritising of the development and introduction of new services. With one exception (small group home for children with disability, planned for 2016), all other eight services are planned to be in function by July 2015 i.e. in one year and three months⁴⁴. However, many of these services are highly specialised and require important investment in training of the staff⁴⁵, systematisation of new positions for the staff, feasibility studies, reorganisation/adaptation of the existing buildings of the institution and available funding for covering these costs. There is no costing associated to the introduction of this wide range of services. It is also unclear the estimated demand for each planned new service. Hence, the provision for further planning mentioned in the (revised) Operational Plan of Transformation (page 19, English version), consisting of a "Project Action Plan" and "Transformation Action Plans" for individual projects. To conclude, the Operational Plan of Transformation is not really an 'operational' document, but rather a framework presenting various options for the transformation of the institution. Further work is needed until many of planned new services could be introduced. The time framework for transformation is end 2017 according to the National Plan of Action for Children 2013-2017, goal 4.2.

The Project foresaw to support the establishment and functioning of two Small Group Homes until the end of its lifetime. In this respect, a concept for this service, including financial projections, has been developed in 2013. Until May 2014, only one Small Group Home (SGH) was built in Bijelo Polje with the support of the US Defence Cooperation Office (partner of MoLSW and UNICEF) and endowed with furniture and equipment by the Project. Given the estimated need for 8 SGHs in the country⁴⁶, the Project is thus covering 12.5% of this need. Signature of Memorandum of Understanding between the MoLSW, CSW and Bijelo Polje municipality for the functioning of the SGH, assessment of beneficiaries, staff recruitment and training are pending and **it is unlikely that the SGH will be operational until July 2014, as planned in the Project. Delays in introducing this service have been primarily caused by the refusal of Danilovgrad municipality (the initially planned location) to host the SGH;** based on the feedback received from key informants, it seems that **public misinformation and intolerance towards children with disability played a major role in rejecting the service.** *'It is harder to crack prejudice than an atom'*, said Einstein. Locating the SGH in Bijelo Polje was not popular either among the population and local self-government, due to intolerance, respectively additional costs encumbered by the service (salaries and running costs will be covered

⁴⁴ Although the Operational Plan mentions that transformation action plans should be developed initially for foster care for children under three years of age, mother and baby shelter, preparation and support for older children about to graduate from *Mladost* and one on-site Small Group Home for children without parental care, the timeline for these four services is July 2015 as for the other planned services.

⁴⁵ The training courses on child abandonment prevention and foster care provided by the Project and totalling 90 hours, have been attended only by 4 staff members (deputy managers, social worker, psychologist) of the institution which employs around 100 people, meaning that there is no critical mass achieved in terms of preparing the staff for new functions.

⁴⁶ Based on assessment done by A. Dunn, UNICEF Consultant who developed the SGH model (2013, page 14).

from the municipality budget). According to feedback from the discussion group with the municipality representatives and other local stakeholders, the location of the SGH had therefore to be repositioned in a hilly neighbourhood of the municipality hosting the hospital and other social institutions (DCC, elderly home, centre for paraplegic people) and situated around 1.5-2 km away from the centre – which goes against the principles of social inclusion, integration of children and youth with disability in the community and public tolerance. The location of the SGH (land provided by the municipality) and the delays in the setting up and the SGH have been outside the control of the Project. Training of staff is dependant on recruitment which is delayed due to the elections in May 2014 (as in the case of staff recruitment for the Institute of Social and Child Protection explained above). **MoLSW's commitment is essential to advance the development of SHGs in the country.**

As far as DCCs are concerned, a service aimed primarily to prevent institutionalisation of children with disabilities, the Project supported the establishment, endowment and operation of 6 new centres (Pljevlja, Herceg Novi, Plav, Ulcinj, Cetinje and Berane), in line with the planned target. It provided training to the staff and mobilised peer support from more experienced DCCs, such as from DCC Bijelo Polje for DCCs in Herceg Novi and Pljevlja. Other 5 DCCs are in the process of establishment in Mojkovac, Budva, Podgorica, Rozaje and Bar (see Annex 10 for the distribution of the DCCs in Montenegro), the MoLSW intending to have a DCC in each big municipality, functioning in line with the upcoming quality standards. The existing two DCCs in Niksic and Bijelo Polje have also benefited of training and have been actively engaged in the development of quality standards and peer support to the new centres. In total, 130 training hours have been provided to the DCC staff members, very appreciated being the training on working with autistic children, engaging parents of children with disability in the implementation of the individual action plans, team work. The site visits to the DCC in Cetinje (set up in 2013) and Bijelo Polje (the first DCC set up in the country and functioning since 2004) and the interviews with the management and focus groups showed a high level of professionalism and commitment of the staff which reflects on the quality of care of the beneficiary children, an aspect analysed in the impact section of the report.

Another service which has successfully been supported by the Project to develop was fostering of children left without parental care. In order to do that, the Project has provided:

- technical assistance to the MoLSW and working groups for the improvement of legal and policy framework, including quality standards

Result ↓ inclusion in the new Law on Social and Child Protection (art. 67 and 68) of provisions on various types of fostering, including emergency fostering which is of utmost importance to prevent institutionalisation of children under the age of three, and training and licensing of foster parents, in line with The United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children which recommends that authorities “develop appropriate criteria for assessing the professional and ethical fitness of care providers and for their accreditation, monitoring and supervision” (para. 54); adopted rulebook on foster care; Strategy for the Development of Fostering in Montenegro 2012-2016 adopted in 2012.

- training to the MoLSW, staff of CSW and Children's Home 'Mladost' in foster care and training of trainers for foster families, combined with a large campaign for the promotion of fostering as an alternative family-based care and open days organised by the CSWs in partnership with the municipality and with UNICEF support

Result ↓ four times increase in the number of non-kinship foster families, from 5 in 2010 to 20 in May 2014, which represents 35-40% of the required non-kinship foster families to cover the need by 2016, according to the Strategy for the Development of Fostering.

Outcome 4: Behaviour change towards social inclusion enabled - focus vulnerable children

This outcome has been fully achieved, as seen in Table 10.

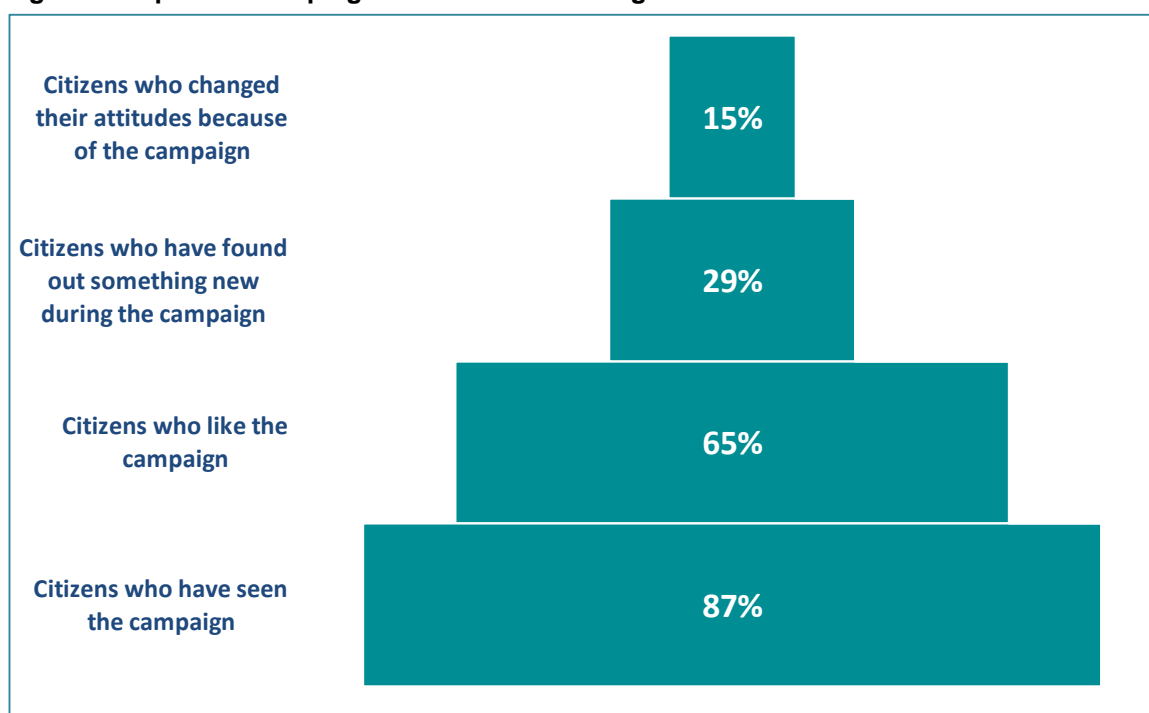
Table 10. Achievement of Outcome 4 Indicators

Outcome 4 indicators (ToC)	Baseline	Target	Achieved (%)*
Massive behavior change and awareness raising campaign on promotion of fostering conducted in partnership with the Government, CSOs, private sector and other stakeholders	No	Yes	Achieved (100%)
Number of media reports on the Campaign and fostering	0	100	Over achieved (216 reports in 2013 = 216%)

* By 20 May 2014

The first indicator related to the campaign has been fully achieved. **The campaign carried out by the Project between 19 September 2013 and end January 2014 has produced important behavioural change (see Figure 6), since it boosted fostering from 10 non-kinship families before the campaign to 20 families in May 2014 (which is a 100% increase).**

Figure 6. Impact of Campaign on Behaviour Change



Source: Ipsos Strategic Marketing (2014), "Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Survey"

The impact of the campaign was much lower on kinship foster families, the CSWs registering only 4 new families, bringing the total number of kinship families in the country to 224 in May 2014. Indeed, the campaign has been mainly focused on non-kinship fostering given its low level of development in the country and the need to have a pool of trained and licensed foster parents able to take in care children at risk of being institutionalised, as an emergency or for a longer period.

The campaign and the fostering subject has been reported in 216 media reports during period September-December 2013, meaning that the respective outcome indicator has been already over-

achieved one month before the end of the campaign. The number of media reports is much higher if January 2014 is considered as well. One-minute junior films produced by children participating in the film production workshop financed by the Project were broadcasted during the campaign.

To summarise, the main factors which increased the effectiveness of the project include: the EU accession process which drives the social and child protection policy agenda of the country; a reform-oriented leadership of the MoLSW since 2013; enthusiasm and commitment for change at the level of 'Komanski Most' Institute, Children's Home 'Mladost' and DCCs; in-house technical expertise of UNICEF which provided strategic guidance to the MoLSW and its partners at central and local level in line with international standards and good practices; top level trainers and consultants provided by the Project; media engagement in challenging mindsets and behavioural change. Limited capacity building provided to the managerial levels of the reform at central and local levels, small, understaffed social and child protection department and legal department within the MoLSW, lack of prioritising of new services in the transformation operational plan of Children's Home 'Mladost', insufficient public tolerance and understanding of the issues related to children with disability, economic crisis and elections have hampered the achievement of some planned results according to targets and estimated calendar of implementation.

The evaluation team has identified some **additional, unplanned results of the Project**, as follows:

- **54 new jobs created** of which 53 job in the newly-set up DCCs assisted by the Project and 1 job for a special educator in COCSEN Cetinje following the advice of the Project consultant who paid monitoring visits to this commission; the jobs were primarily occupied by women;
- **48 open days jointly organised by the CSWs and local self-governments in all municipalities across the country, following the campaign on the promotion of fostering**; in this respect, the Project has developed a Q&A leaflet to be distributed to the participants in the open days and delivered a PR training to the CSWs in order to help them to cope with interested potential foster families, media and general public;
- **use of individual action plans methodology for children in 'Komanski Most' Institute as a basis for developing similar plans for adult residents**;
- **use of family capacity assessment methodology for candidate foster parents in the assessment of other social cases by the CSWs** (e.g. assessment of capacity of parents to take care of the child after divorce or in cases of domestic violence, children with behavioural problems, etc.);
- **volunteering work in child protection services among children** who produced one-minute junior films for the campaign, as an effect of the latter.

3.3 Efficiency

Evaluation of Project efficiency was based on the following evaluation questions:

How well have the implementation of activities been managed? To what extent are activities implemented as scheduled? What management and monitoring tools have been used?
How well have the financial resources been used / were funds managed in a cost-effective manner / what is the correlation between funds utilized and outputs / results achieved / could the same results be achieved with less resources?
Did the project ensure co-ordination with the other two components of IPA 2010 Social Inclusion Project and with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?

The Project has been implemented by the MoLSW, key duty bearer, in partnership and with the technical assistance of UNICEF Country Office in Montenegro. A Project Implementation Unit was set up, partially based in UNICEF, with the task to ensure efficiency and expertise in the operational

management of the Project (Project Manager/Child Protection Officer and Child Protection Assistant), and partially based in the joint Project Implementation Office shared with UNDP (administrative support consultant, deinstitutionalisation and decentralisation consultant and senior consultant) to support the MoLSW in the implementation of reform. Most of members of the Project Implementation Unit and consultants were women. **The Project has been managed in a highly professional manner and the members of the project management and implementation team have to be commended for their commitment, results orientation, rigorous monitoring and excellent quality of reporting of progress against set targets. The feedback from all stakeholders confirm that activities and management of the project were conducted professionally and with high quality.**

Following a mid-term evaluation in 2012, several changes in the Project were agreed with the EUD, as follows: no-cost extension of the Project with one additional year; revision of indicators in the logframe to make the purpose, outcomes and outputs clearer and more evaluable; reallocation of initially planned grant funding to investment in the DCC in Podgorica and additional training, as needed.

There have been significant delays in the implementation of activities (see Annex 11), most of them outside the control of the Project. The late adoption of the Law on Social and Child Protection (2.5 years later than planned) has delayed, in chain, the finalisation and adoption of secondary legislation, the delivery of case management training courses for the CSWs⁴⁷ and Institute for Social and Child Protection and the launch of the campaign on foster care. Two rounds of elections (2012, 2014), frequent changes in the leadership of the MoLSW⁴⁸ and limited human resources in the social and child protection system (including small, understaffed legal and social and child protection departments within the MoLSW) to contribute to the development of the legal and policy framework, finalisation of the transformation plan of Children's Home 'Mladost' and development of the Inter-sectoral Protocol represented additional factors of delay. At the same time, **the strategy used by the Project to ensure full involvement of the Government at every stage of the process meant that the original timeframe for some activities was overambitious and required rescheduling.** These issues were acknowledged by UNICEF in its progress reports:

"Over-reliance on the finalization of the Law on Social and Child Protection as a pre-requisite for the initiation of other activities proved to be inadvisable". (Progress Report 2012, page 20)

"Similarly, the limited resources and capacities of several professional spheres in child protection and social welfare resulted in a relatively small number of individuals being burdened with participation in multiple working groups and drafting processes, inevitably slowing down the overall workflow of activities". (Progress Report 2012, page 20)

"The numerous changes in the social and child protection system brought by the reform proved to be challenging for the rather limited professional capacities in the system. For instance, MoLSW negotiations with the Secretariat for Legislation significantly delayed the process of development of bylaws". (Progress Report 2013, page 19)

Lack of consensus within the Government on the background of economic crisis and cuts in public spending have impeded the timely establishment of the Institute for Social and Child Protection and associated capacity building activities. . Despite strong Government's commitment to expanding the network of DCCs, the setting up of these services was also behind the schedule due to financial constraints and budget limitations at municipality level. Public misinformation and intolerance towards children with disability blocked the building of the SGH in Danilovgrad and

⁴⁷ The by-law regulating the organization, norms, standards and methods of work of CSW, including stipulations on case management, was adopted in December 2013.

⁴⁸ Two ministers and three deputy ministers since the beginning of the Project

delayed the de-institutionalisation of children from 'Komanski Most' Institute. In addition, **MoLSW's commitment on developing SGHs was rather weak**. *"However, the project put great efforts into maintaining good working relations and open communication channels with relevant stakeholders to ensure high-level support from central and local levels institutions"* (ROM 2014, page 2).

Several major risks have been identified in the DoA, but no mitigation strategy has been designed. In order to reduce the impact of these delays upon the achievement of the planned results, **the project management team was forced to take several remedial measures during implementation**, with the approval of the EUD and the PSC. Work on the development of standards and rulebooks took place based on the draft law and in parallel with its adoption process. A wide membership and representation for working groups and drafting teams was sought in order to avoid having a small number of individuals spread thinly across multiple activities (especially since MoLSW's staffing is rather limited). A proposal for the structure and operation of the Institute was also prepared and circulated to relevant stakeholders for feedback and improvement in order to be ready for implementation once the Institute is set up. As far as the SGH is concerned, the location has been moved to another municipality, Bijelo Polje, willing to host, provide land and cover the running costs of this service. Finally, one year extension has been granted by the EUD to allow the finalisation of activities⁴⁹ and attainment of estimated results.

It is important to mention that **the Project aimed to put the building blocks of a complex reform in the social and child protection system and to assist the Government in its first years of implementation. From this perspective, the goal of the Project was too ambitious for the set timeframe, available resources and the particular context of Montenegro**, as formulated by a member of the Steering Committee: *"(...) the work on the Law should not be subjected to the Project's deadlines, but the current capacities in Montenegro"* (minutes of the meeting of the PSC, November 2011, page 4). No risks assessment was done and the DoA does not include any mitigation strategy. Despite these delays, the output performance is in line with the intervention logic, outputs are of good quality and accessible to relevant stakeholders, and the overall impact and results of the Project are significant as confirmed by a large number of people consulted for this evaluation.

Box 3. Monitoring of the Project

The project management team has carried out the monitoring of the Project on the basis of the Logframe, activity plans, resource utilisation plans and Gantt charts as well as Project Cooperation Agreements (PCA) concluded with partner NGOs and reports from consultants, trainers and other contractors. The ToC was produced retrospectively for the purpose of this evaluation and has not constituted a monitoring document. Consultants and contractors were required to submit progress reports on a regular basis to the project management team who, at its turn, paid regular site monitoring visits to 'Komanski Most' Institute, Children's Home 'Mladost', assisted DCCs and to the SGH construction site.

Results monitoring has been done against set targets for each output, outcome and purpose indicator. **Human rights principles** (most notably *non-discrimination, equality, inclusion, rule of law, progressive realisation of children's rights*) were fully embedded in the monitoring work. **Process monitoring** went smoothly and assisted adaptation of project strategies to meet the arising needs in the field. UNICEF, as implementation partner of the MoLSW, released annual progress reports to the EUD and presented progress updates during the meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). Prior to each meeting, UNICEF prepared and shared with all PSC members a PowerPoint

⁴⁹ Only 6 out of 18 activities were implemented within the initially set timeframe (see Annex 11)

presentation, outlining the Status of project activities and progress in the achievement of results using the Logframe indicators.

The PSC was composed of representatives of the MoLSW, MoE, MoH, MoF, MoFAEI, UNICEF, EUD, UNDP, Union of Municipalities and NIPAC. **The PSC has been instrumental in ensuring an efficient monitoring, supervision and guidance of Project activities, but also for decision-making** as the line ministries were represented at Ministry or Deputy Minister level, while the other member organisations were also represented by high level officials. It met eight times until May 2014, with discussions and decisions rigorously documented in the minutes of the meetings. A Technical Group, composed of the Deputy Minister of the MoLSW, focal points in the MoH and MoE, project managers from UNICEF and UNDP and EUD task manager has been also set up for more operational work discussions and preparation of the PSC.

The Project has been the subject of three Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) missions, carried out in 2011, 2012 and 2014 and of a mid-term evaluation in 2012, most of their recommendations being considered by UNICEF and the project management team.

As far as financial aspects are concerned, financial reports, with expenditures denominated in EUR, have been attached to each annual progress report of UNICEF. **The financial reports are very well structured, including expenditures broken down per types of budget categories, with unit costs and number of units presented in a detailed way.** With few exceptions⁵⁰, the financial data reported in the annual reports indicate that there was pretty straightforward spending as per approved budget by the donor and according to the Contribution Agreement signed with UNICEF, with funds spent in an accountable and cost-effective manner. **The analysis of unit costs shows that the fees paid to local consultants were in line with the market prices and salary levels for the respective level of qualification, experience and responsibility in an international project**, varying between 110 EUR/day and 150 EUR/day for short-term assignments and between 900 EUR/month and 1500 EUR/month for long-term contracts. Administrative costs represented 7% of direct eligible costs in line with the usual thresholds for such costs in internationally-financed projects. Annex 12 presents an overview of the budget of the Project. It is to be mentioned that the budget is broken down per budget categories, according to the donor's template and reporting requirements. There is no budget breakdown per activities so as to be able to make an analysis of the cost/activity.

Until end May 2014, an amount of 1,098,651 EUR (80% of the budget) has been spent. **It is estimated that full budget will be disbursed by the end of the Project**, the next payments consisting of a transfer of funds to UNDP (which did the joint procurement of works) for the DCC in Podgorica and for equipment.

As far as **cost-effectiveness of human resources** is concerned, **internal staff of MoLSW and UNICEF** were engaged to review and comment on various policy and legal drafts, without an additional cost for the Project. **Local experts were used whenever possible instead of international consultants. Regional experts with significant knowledge of comparable country circumstances (Serbia, Croatia) and language skills were contracted** which resulted in timely production of high quality deliverables (e.g. assessment of the CSWs, mapping of child protection services, training curricula for foster care, family counselling and case management) and cost savings, in particular on translation costs. In terms of training delivery and promotion of fostering, **the Project could have used more the capacity of experienced local NGOs in this area, as a source of co-**

⁵⁰ According to the financial data for period 2011-2013 made available by UNICEF, the planned unit cost has been exceeded for the consultancy fees related to capacity building (from 227 EUR to 278 EUR, budgetary line 2.5) and family and community based services (from 233 EUR to 355 EUR, budgetary line 2.6) as well as for the travel for international experts (from 228 EUR to 344 EUR). However, the overall allocated budget for the respective budgetary line has not been exceeded.

trainers and providers of support to foster families via foster parents' clubs run by these organisations – an approach which was not sufficiently embraced by the MoLSW, despite UNICEF efforts in this regard. A cost-effective practice of UNICEF was also to **team up international experts with local experts** to enable the latter learn and ensure proper follow up without reliance on international experts. *“For example, the Consultant on decentralization and deinstitutionalization and the Senior Consultant on social welfare (who is a defectologist/special educator by training) supported twice the revision of care plans of children in Komanski Most after the initial drafting of plans under the supervision of the international consultant”* (Mid-term evaluation, 2012, page 38).

An outstanding efficiency feature of the Project was the investment in the prevention of institutionalisation, which is widely known to be the most expensive form of alternative care and which has dramatic negative consequences upon the normal development of a child. *“Children in institutional care are more likely to suffer from attachment disorders, developmental delay and failure in brain development. According to research, for every three months spent within an institution the child's physical development is delayed by one month”.* (Palayret, G., 2012, page 8).

Responding to the OHCHR/UNICEF call to action (2011) to end placing children under three years in institutions, the Project has focused part of its activities on these children (ban on institutionalisation introduced in the new law, training for prevention of baby abandonment, conclusion of an Protocol for Intersectoral Cooperation by the three relevant line ministries aimed to prevent abandonment of young children, etc.). This was not only in line with international human rights standards, but also a cost-effective strategy in itself, since early childhood is the most critical developmental phase in life. Institutionalization can have destructive long-lasting impact on young children's health and development which would require massive resources in the future to remedy these effects.

The Project has promoted and developed several forms of alternative care of children left without parental care (foster care, SGH) as well as DCCs for children with disability. According to key informants of this evaluation, foster care is the cheapest form of care, with a monthly unit cost of 260 EUR/child⁵¹ as compared to residential care of 520 EUR/child⁵². **The development of foster parenting has greater benefits for children at less financial cost to the government, especially for young children.** In this respect, the public awareness campaign launched by the Project to promote the development of non-kinship foster was a good investment.

Although foster care is the most cost-effective, the country also needs SGHs for children without parental care with disability who are leaving the large-scale Children's Home 'Mladost' and for Montenegrin children living in residential care in Serbian and who return home. **The estimated unit cost in a SGH is 1,500 EUR/child⁵³, three times higher than the average cost of residential care,** making it the most expensive alternative form of care. However, it has to be mentioned that the unit cost in residential care of 520 EUR refers to all children residing in 'Mladost' (with and without disability) and thus embeds in its calculation the salaries of all staff (with and without specific qualifications in working with children with disability, more than half with primary or secondary education and thus low salaries compared to special educators, for example). The majority of staff in SGH should be highly specialised (with bigger salaries) and the service requires better staff ratios. Therefore, an accurate comparison between the two services would have required the calculation of a unit cost in large-scale residential care only for the children with disability residing in 'Mladost' and not

⁵¹ It includes: housing allowance (200 EUR) and compensation for work (60 EUR for first child). If child allowance is added (32 EUR), the overall unit cost for foster care is 292 EUR.

⁵² Figure provided by the MoLSW to UNICEF and representing an estimation of unit cost in Children's Home 'Mladost'.

⁵³ Estimation done by A.Dunn (UNICEF consultant) who developed the concept of SGH. However, the cost estimation is purely theoretical since the first SGH is still to be set up.

an average for all. In any event, **once the system is reformed, there will be less children in residential care in favour of more children in family-based alternative care which is cheaper or reunited with their families with some support services which also costs less than residential care. In these conditions, even the unit costs of SGH are higher, when multiplied by a smaller number of beneficiary children, they will not induce additional costs to the Government.**

Apart from foster care and SGH, **the Project has also supported the development of a network of DCCs to prevent the abandonment of children with disability (assuming that their capacity is used in full) where the unit cost per month is around 500-600 EUR/child⁵⁴.** This is consistent with research in Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Moldova which suggests that the cost of SGH is three times the cost of preventative social services support to families. The Government and its partners, is currently developing a rulebook on the pricing of various social and child protection services, aimed to provide clarity on the structure and level of costs encumbered by each type of service.

The Project has also supported the capacity building of COCSEN which more than doubled the number of assessments since 2011. The aim was to increase the knowledge and skills of the commissions to carry out a rigorous assessment and orient the children to the most appropriate service i.e. regular school, special school or DCC. According to feedback received from key informants during the field phase, **the number of children oriented to regular school has considerably increased as compared to several years ago. Apart from the obvious benefit of inclusion into mainstream schooling, this has a financial impact too, as the annual "cost of students" in a mainstream school is 519 EUR compared to the annual cost in special education of 4,110 EUR⁵⁵.**

Of particular interest was the fiscal analysis of the new Law on Social and Child Protection, a kind of ex-ante assessment of the financial and fiscal impact and of any savings to the public budget that the implementation of the law could bring about. The fiscal analysis was very much appreciated by all stakeholders as it highlighted that the country could benefit of a modern legislation, based on European good practices and aligned with international human rights standards, with similar or even less financial effort.

Another efficiency feature of the Project was cost sharing by engaging national and local, public and private funding for the new child care services. In this respect, UNICEF has successfully used its core role of leveraging resources for the benefit of children in need and their families. In the case of DCCs, the land was provided by the municipality which are also covering the salaries and the cost of utilities. The state budget, via the MoLSW, covers the rest of running costs, by paying a monthly contribution for each child (equivalent to the monthly housing allowance for a child in institution). The premises are provided either by the municipality or the MoLSW. The Project has covered the endowment with furniture, equipment and materials as well as ensured the training of the staff. The same financial formula is planned for the SGH, except the premises built by the US Defence Cooperation Office, a donor identified by the US Embassy in Podgorica through UNICEF advocacy and engaged in direct cooperation with the MoLSW. Parents do not contribute for the moment and a rulebook is under preparation that will regulate the financial participation of beneficiaries. For efficiency reasons, the MoLSW proposed that the DCC and the SGH in Bijelo Polje have the same management and that the children in SGH will automatically qualify for using the DCC as well. For the fostering campaign, UNICEF has managed to engage 8 commercial TV stations which broadcasted the video clips of the campaign for free. Apart from high level politicians, diplomats and foreign guests, the campaign involved popular artists and current foster parents who promoted and participated *pro bono*

⁵⁴ Based on figures provided by DCC Pljevlja and DCC Bijelo Polje, if the centres are running at full capacity.

⁵⁵ Government of Montenegro, "Strategy for Inclusive Education up until 2018"

in the campaign. The premises for the 48 open days organised by CSWs jointly with the LSGs have been provided for free by the municipalities.

There has been one instance when the evaluation team has noted a very low efficiency level of the services supported by the Project. It refers to the DCC in Cetinje, which had at the moment of the site visit only 5 beneficiaries, of whom only 2 children for a total capacity of 30 children i.e. a utilisation rate of 16%. Still, the centre employed 13 full-time staff from the very beginning (6.5 months of DCC functioning). Restrictive access criteria (minimum eligible age: 6 years), parents' misinformation, stigma or overestimation of need are possible causes for low attendance of the centre. Assessment of utilisation rate in the other DCCs is advisable to take corrective measures, if needed.

The MoLSW in partnership with UNICEF and UNDP managed to attract additional funding to cover emerging needs during the Project implementation and for the continuation of reforms:

- from the state budget: 145,000 EUR transferred to UNDP for the adaptation of the DCC in Podgorica (additional funding needed, as 70,000 EUR reallocated for this purpose from the budget of Child Care Reform Project/UNICEF contract were insufficient)
- from UNICEF own budget: assessment study of support and prevention mechanisms in health institutions – 10,270 EUR; monitoring visits of social workers to Montenegrin children placed in Serbian institutions for revision of individual care plans – 25,500 EUR; training of COCSEN in autism and monitoring visits – 13,450 EUR
- from EU: bridging – 250,000 EUR (200,000 EUR UNICEF and 50,000 EUR UNDP); IPA 2 – 1.5 million EUR (estimated)
- from the state budget: bridging – 350,000 EUR

As all components of IPA 2010 Social Inclusion Project were inter-related, a single PSC was established to guide and oversee all three segments of the work.

There has been a very good cooperation and co-ordination between the project component implemented by UNICEF and the one on social welfare reform implemented by UNDP, especially concerning the development of quality standards for various services and rulebooks for CSWs, training of social workers and local planning initiatives, linking LPAs for children supported by UNICEF with Social Inclusion Plans supported by UNDP. There are currently discussion between the MoLSW and the two organisations on how to integrate the database with records of children into the upcoming Social Card system implemented by UNDP. According to the interviews with UNICEF and UNDP, both components of the IPA 2010 Social Inclusion Project benefitted from joint strategic planning. The evaluation team has noted that the two teams share the same view concerning their work, frequently mentioning that *“we are not talking here about a project, we are really talking about the reform”, “we do not consider that we implement a project, but rather a complex reform initiative”*. The MoLSW in close cooperation with the two UN organisations has managed to fund raise for the continuation of reforms. In more practical terms, both implementation teams shared the same office to ensure day-to-day coordination and cost efficiency and used to the extent possible the same consultants and trainers for consistency reasons. Joint procurement was done for both components in order to minimise the costs and ensure coordinated implementation schedules (e.g. for the adaptation works of the DCC in Podgorica). Procurement process were transparent and guided by the value-for-money principle.

The Project built on the achievements and lessons learnt of previous projects and on the experience of UNICEF in assisting the country to develop alternative forms of care and services to vulnerable children and families, in particular to children residing in institutions, thereby ensuring coherence, complementarity and cost-effective use of resources.

3.4 Impact

Evaluation of Project impact was based on the following evaluation questions:

To what extent has the Project contributed to de-institutionalisation of children with disabilities from special institution 'Komanski Most' (Podgorica)?
To what extent has the Project contributed to a decrease in the number of children residing in Institution for Children without parental care 'Mladost' (Bijela)?
To what extent has the project contributed to increasing the number of children with disabilities benefiting from community-based services? Were there any elements which could hamper the impact of assistance?
How successful was the project in changing the attitudes and knowledge of citizens with regards to family-based alternatives (fostering) for children without parental care?

The goal of the Project was to contribute to providing access of children and vulnerable families to comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable child protection system. According to the general opinion of the stakeholders who were consulted for this evaluation, **the Project has achieved critical results that pushed the reform forward.**

In order to measure in a more precise way the contribution of the Project to this goal, the ToC includes five impact indicators at MoRES (Monitoring Results for Equity System) level 4. Table 11 presents the indicators and achievements against set targets. Analysis of impact is completed by responding to the evaluation questions in the matrix which capture additional dimensions of the Project impact.

Table 11. Achievement of Impact Indicators

Impact indicators (ToC)	Baseline	Target	Achieved (%)****
Number of de-institutionalised children from special Institution 'Komanski most'	10	0	Partially achieved (8 children = 80% left 'Komanski Most')
Number of children aged 0-3 in Institution for children without parental care 'Mladost'	28	20 (30% decrease)	Over achieved (2 children = 98.2% decrease)
Number of children aged over 3 in Institution for children without parental care 'Mladost'	126	100 (20% decrease)	Over achieved (95 children = 24.6% decrease)
Number of children with disabilities attending Day Care Centres for Children with Disabilities*	54** 30***	108 (100% increase) Not established	Over achieved (127 children and young people = 117.6%) 69 children = 2.3 increase compared to baseline
% of citizens who know that fostering is a form of protection of children without adequate parental care	35%	45%	Over achieved (58% of citizens ≈ 129%)

*Result indicator in the Logframe; its is however an impact indicator as correctly identified in ToC; **Children and young people above 18 years; *** Children assisted by DCCs in Bijelo Polje and Niksic functioning before the Project, data from 2010; **** By 20 May 2014

In order to contribute to the deinstitutionalisation of the children from 'Komanski Most' Institute, the Project has supported the development of a Plan of closure of the institution for children. As already mentioned in the effectiveness section, the plan was not adopted, however the staff received technical assistance to develop individual care plans for children residing in the institution, which were regularly revised with the support of UNICEF experts. Contacts with parents have improved. **For half of the children, it was the first time when parents visited them or were at parents' house.** In 2012, the mother of one child residing in the institution was found after 17 years of no contact and she visited her son.

The figures show that in May 2014, there were two children still residing in 'Komanski Most' Institute. One of them will turn 18 in November 2014, while the other next year. Given the fact that they are

brothers and that the older brother was already in the adults ward, the CSW decided not to separate them. They attend full day educational activities at the Resource Centre “1st June” Podgorica. As far as the other eight children who were residing in ‘Komanski Most’ Institute in 2011 are concerned, the situation is the following: one child passed away in 2012; five children turned 18 meanwhile and were moved to the adults ward within ‘Komanski Most’; the remaining two children were moved to the boarding section of the Resource Centre Podgorica”, where they attend morning educational/treatment activities. In the light of the above, **the children residing in ‘Komanski Most’ in 2011 were not actually deinstitutionalised, but rather relocated to other sections of the institution or to the boarding section of Resource Centre Podgorica. The plan was to move all children to the SGH, but the delays in the setting up of this service have impeded most of them to leave the institution.** The minutes of the PSC meetings and the interviews with the MoLSW, UNICEF and management of ‘Komanski Most’ Institute confirm these facts.

It is nevertheless important to mention the efforts of the specialist team of the institution, major duty bearer, to make easier the transition of the five children who turned 18 to the adults ward. In this respect, the team prepared detailed individual transition plans, of very good quality and with clear objectives. During the site visits, the evaluation team noted that the children and young people residing there are well cared, look happy, interact easily with ‘strangers’ (like the evaluators) and have a bond with the director and the staff. At their turn, **the staff has changed the attitudes towards the children and modernised their work practices over the last three years. The professional structure was improved as more specialists were hired. The management is promoting openness of institution to the community, cooperation with NGOs and international partners** (such as UNICEF). All these positive improvements have been documented and reported by independent oversight bodies (NGOs, Ombudsman, Council of Europe).

“We believe that the Public Institution “Komanski most” has started the process of positive transformation from the institution where severe human rights violations had occurred, to the institution that cares about its residents and promotes their rights in the community” (Human Rights Action Centre et al., 2013, page 45)⁵⁶

“From the outset, it should be stressed that the delegation received no allegations, and did not gather any other evidence, of ill-treatment of residents by staff at the Institution. The atmosphere at the establishment was relaxed and the delegation witnessed that staff had a caring attitude towards residents (Council of Europe, 2014, page 44)⁵⁷

The Project has contributed to these achievements from the perspective of technical assistance provided to the team and engagement of specialists from the institution in the development of the legal framework (via participation in working groups).

Results obtained in the deinstitutionalisation of children residing in Children’s Home ‘Mladost’ are presented in Table 12.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Action, Centre for Antidiscrimination “Equista”, Centre for Civic Education, Women’s Safe House (2013), “Respect for Human Rights of Residents in the Public Institution “Komanski Most”, Podgorica

⁵⁷ Council of Europe (2014), “Report to the Government of Montenegro on the visit to Montenegro carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 13 to 20 February 2013”, Strasbourg

Table 12. In-Flows and Out-Flows of Children in 'Mladost' Institution, 2010-2014

Category / Year	Beginning of year	New admissions	Leaving the Home	Reasons for leaving				
				Fostering	Adoption	Return to Biological family	Transferred to other institution	Turned 18
Baseline Children 0-3	28	26	14	3	6	5	0	0
Baseline Children >3	126	10	21	2	0	9	2	9
BASELINE TOTAL 2010*	154	36	35	5	6	14	2	9
Children 0-3 with developmental needs/disabilities	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	NA
Children 0-3 without developmental needs/disabilities	36	9	10	0	6	4	0	NA
Subtotal 0-3	37	11	10	0	6	4	0	0
Children >3 with developmental needs/disabilities	30	0	3	0	0	0	2	0
Children >3 without developmental needs/disabilities	75	10	28	0	0	11	1	17
Subtotal >3	105	10	31	0	0	11	3	17
TOTAL 2011	142	21	41	0	6	15	3	17
Children 0-3 with developmental needs/disabilities	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	NA
Children 0-3 without developmental needs/disabilities	20	12	12	1	5	6	0	NA
Subtotal 0-3	21	13	12	1	5	6	0	0
Children >3 with developmental needs/disabilities	31	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children >3 without developmental needs/disabilities	71	6	14	2	0	9	0	3
Subtotal >3	102	10	14	2	0	9	0	3
TOTAL 2012	123	23	26	3	5	15	0	3
Children 0-3 with developmental needs/disabilities	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	NA
Children 0-3 without developmental needs/disabilities	15	9	11	4	5	2	0	NA
Subtotal 0-3	16	9	12	4	6	2	0	0
Children >3 with developmental needs/disabilities	31	4	2	0	2	0	0	0
Children >3 without developmental needs/disabilities	72	9	18	6	1	7	1	3
Subtotal >3	103	13	20	6	3	7	1	3
TOTAL 2013**	119	22	32	10	9	9	1	3
Children 0-3 with developmental needs/disabilities	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA
Children 0-3 without developmental needs/disabilities	3	0	3	0	2	1	0	NA
Subtotal 0-3	5	0	3	0	2	1	0	0
Children >3 with developmental needs/disabilities	34	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Children >3 without developmental needs/disabilities	70	1	9	4	0	0	0	3
Subtotal >3	104	1	10	4	0	0	1	5
TOTAL 2014***	109	1	13	4	2	1	1	5

* It includes 12 children who were temporarily placed in 'Mladost' at the request of CSW Podgorica until the housing issue of their families was resolved. ** Data at 5 December 2013 *** Data at 20 May 2014

Legend: blue – baseline year, red – project years, grey – age categories

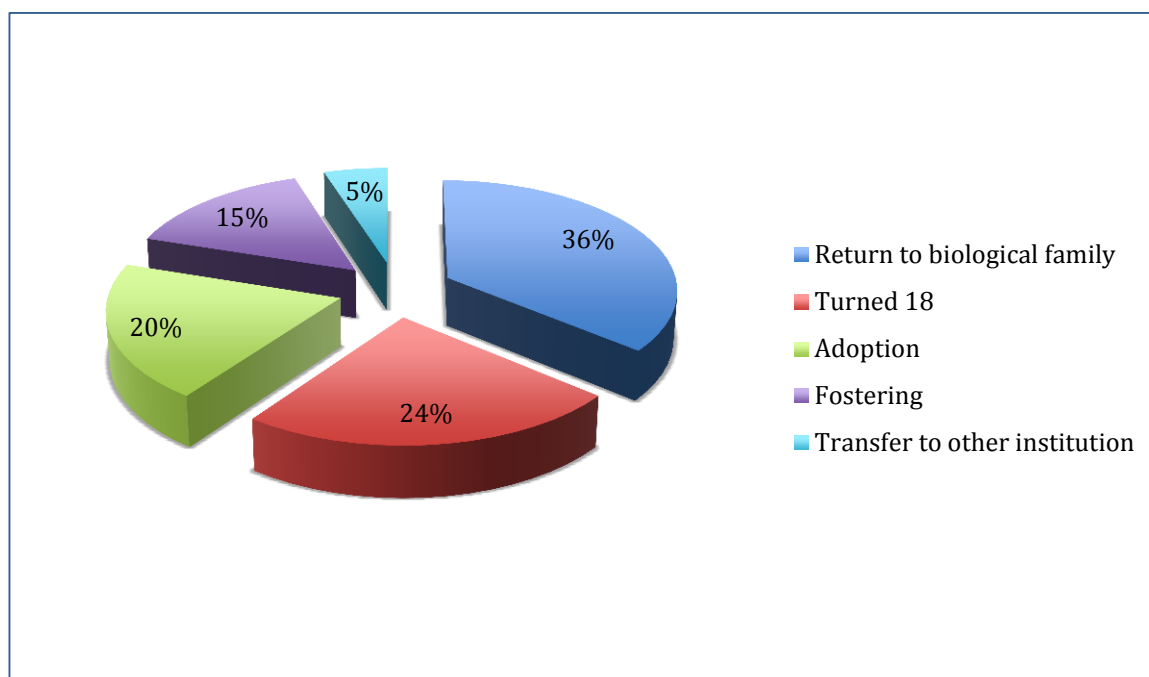
Source: Based on data provided by Children's Home 'Mladost'

The number of children aged 0-3 residing in Children's Home 'Mladost' has registered a spectacular decrease, from 28 children at the beginning of 2010 to 2 children in May 2014, representing a decrease of 98.2%. One of the two remaining children will be adopted soon. Practically, 'Mladost' is very near to full deinstitutionalisation of children aged 0-3. The objective of the institution to stop the admissions for this age group in compliance with the new Law on Social and Child Protection is almost a reality. During the first five months of 2014, no admissions have been

registered in the institution and **the management of 'Mladost' and its partners in the MoLSW and UNICEF have to be highly commended for their commitment to do whatever necessary to maintain the policy of zero tolerance to institutionalisation of children under the age of three.** In order to do that, there is an urgent need to ensure a pool of licensed foster carers (also from among the existing staff of the institution, according to the Operational Plan of Transformation) who could take in emergency care or longer foster care of children who are at risk of being institutionalised.

The number of children above 3 years has also decreased from 126 children in 2010 to 95 children in May 2014, meaning a decrease of 24.6%. Placements to which children in 'Mladost' were discharged are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Placements to which children in 'Mladost' were discharged, 2011-May 2014



The overall reduction in the number of institutionalised children has been mainly due to the return to biological family, followed by departure due to age limit and adoption. Although fostering is ranked 4th in the top reasons for deinstitutionalisation, it is to be mentioned that it tremendously increased from 0 in 2011 to 10 children in 2013 and other 4 children in only five months of 2014. In this respect, the contribution of the Project to the promotion of this alternative form of care and to the improvement of fostering skills of professionals is obvious.

Most problematic is the situation of children with disability or developmental needs residing in 'Mladost', who are the most vulnerable rights holders. Figures in Table 12 show that none of these children were fostered or returned to the biological family. Overall, the proportion of children with disability or development needs who left the institution represents only 6.25% compared to 93.75% for the other children. It appears that SGH might be a solution combined with more efficient support for biological family to facilitate family reunification and, certainly, kinship care and specialised foster care.

As in the case of 'Komanski Most' Institute, the feedback from interviews with key informants and focus groups with professionals as well as direct observation during the site visit to Children's Home 'Mladost' indicate that **significant improvements have taken place at the level of direct work with children (individually and in smaller groups) and interaction with parents, school and**

community by large. Around 60% of children residing in the institution had contacts with their families in 2013. Each child has an assigned staff member (usually a *vaspitaci* – educator) who is responsible for the respective child. The evaluation team was also informed of outstanding improvements of physical mobility of children with disability as a result of personalised work with the respective children. The physical conditions (rooms, didactical materials, learning rooms, leisure space, meals) are excellent and demonstrate a permanent preoccupation of the management and staff to improve the living conditions and ensure a family-type environment.

Despite these improvements, **children consulted during the focus group discussions were unable to identify any improvement in their life over the past three years.** There are two possible reasons identified by the evaluation team based on the analysis of feedback received from children and their behaviour during the focus groups: a) firstly, an insufficient level of responsibility and engagement of children in the organisation of their life, living environment and preparation for independent living, hence the opinion that *“This is an imitation of life”*; children are not involved in the design and revision of their individual care plans, not even the older ones; b) secondly, some elements of gender-based violence among peers which reflects upon the general atmosphere in the institution.

As far as individual care plans are concerned, they are brief and the actions envisaged to be taken in the coming period are only listed (e.g. “stimulation”, “finding a foster family”), without any further description, clear accountability for implementation, etc. The plans are designed and revised mainly by the social worker in cooperation with the psychologist and a representative of the MoLSW, the participation of other team members of the institution being limited to brief written reports on the progress of the respective child over the reviewed period. These reports are then compiled in the revised plan. During the focus group with the staff of institution, some of them confirmed that they were not even aware of such plans, which is worrying all the more since they were educators and directly responsible for children. **There is no evidence of parents’ and children’s engagement in the design or revision of the plans.** Unlike ‘Komanski Most’ Institute, the Project has not assisted Children’s Home ‘Mladost’ in the development and revision of the plans since this was not considered necessary by the MoLSW.

As mentioned in the effectiveness section of the report, the Project supported the setting up and functioning of six new DCCs and the improvement of knowledge and skills of the existing two DCCs. In terms of net impact (attribution), the Project increased the coverage of children and young people with disability and their families who are in need of this service. **Out of 127 beneficiaries of day care services, 69 are children (29 girls and 40 boys, a gender imbalance that might reflect a higher number of boys in the overall number of children with disability across the country), meaning an increase of 2.3 times compared to the baseline.** It is to be mentioned however that the ToC and Logframe have not set a baseline and target for children only, but for children and young people (above 18 years). Based on data received from UNICEF, the baseline for children has been reconstructed (children assisted by DCCs in Bijelo Polje and Niksic functioning before the Project, data from 2010), but measurement of achievement could have been done only against the baseline, as a target level has not been fixed. **It is therefore unclear to what extent the need for day care services has been covered since no reliable figures exist concerning the children with disability, according to various key informants, which makes difficult the planning of service provision.** A proxy indicator would have been the decisions taken by the COCSENs which orient children with special educational needs to DCCs, but the evaluation team has not received these figures from the MoE, as already mentioned in the earlier sections of the report.

Based on the feedback received from interviews with UNICEF, the management of visited DCCs, discussion groups with CSWs, COCSENs, municipalities and NGOs as well as focus groups with parents, **there are factors which could impede the access of children to DCC services:**

- **age limit:** for instance, the DCC in Cetinje, with only 2 beneficiary children since its setting up in November 2013) have arbitrarily set the minimum eligible age for access at 6 years, thus impeding younger children to benefit; other DCCs admit children as from 3.5 years of age, as there are no legal restrictions in this respect;
- **misinformation of parents:** it was reported to the evaluation team that parents are reticent to bring their children to the DCC due to the belief that they will lose entitlement to financial support; this is not true, as confirmed by the MoLSW and the interviewed CSWs;
- **stigma:** parents may refrain from using the DCCs for their children, especially the ones living in rural areas, because of the stigma associated to using this service; they prefer to keep their children at home, sometimes totally 'hidden' from the system of education, health, social welfare and from the community; this is an area which has not been investigated to date;
- **insufficient promotion of the service** by some CSWs.

The parents who are using the service and whom we met during the site visits to DCCs are very satisfied with the level of care and the quality of service. They rate highly the staff in the centres for their humanity: *"Staff here have a big heart"*, and appreciate the positive developments of their children: more sociable with other children; able to show what they need; recognise colours, draw; improved physical mobility; reduced urinary incontinence. Parents, in their double capacity of duty bearers and rights holders, are actively engaged in the process of designing and implementation of the individual care plans, being advised how to work with them at home and monitored by the professionals of the centres. There is a feeling of empowerment that the evaluation team has noted during the discussions with the parents. DCCs also allow the employed parents to go to work. Based on site observation, **children are happy and seem to be well cared; however, concern has been expressed by the parents and professionals that, due to space limitations, some DCC are over-crowded (e.g. Bijelo Polje) and do not allow sufficient individualised care given the heterogeneous needs of beneficiaries who are sharing the same facilities.** There are DCCs serving 3.5 years old children together with young people aged 27 or even 29 (the case of DCCs in Bijelo Polje and Cetinje), or children with multiple disabilities together with autistic children who require a totally different type of care and time dedication of the staff. There is no mechanism in place to measure the satisfaction of beneficiary families and which could provide useful feedback to DCCs for the improvement of work organisation and practices.

Another net impact of the Project refers to the change of attitudes and knowledge of citizens regarding the family-based alternatives for children without parental care, especially fostering. As a result of the public awareness campaign "Every Child Needs a Family" implemented by the Project, large number of media reports and organisation by the CSWs and local self-governments of around 48 informative open days in all municipalities across the country, **the proportion of citizens who know that fostering is a form of protection of children without adequate parental care has increased from 35% to 58%, based on the KAP in January 2013, respectively January 2014. After the campaign, 83% of people thought that a child should be placed in foster care rather than institution, which exceeded the planned level: 60%.** The Project has thus challenged social norms (a core role of UNICEF as well) and produced behavioural changes which led to the fostering of additional 29 children, of whom 16 in non-kinship foster care, in only 3 months after campaign (see Table 13).

Table 13. Impact of Campaign on Fostering

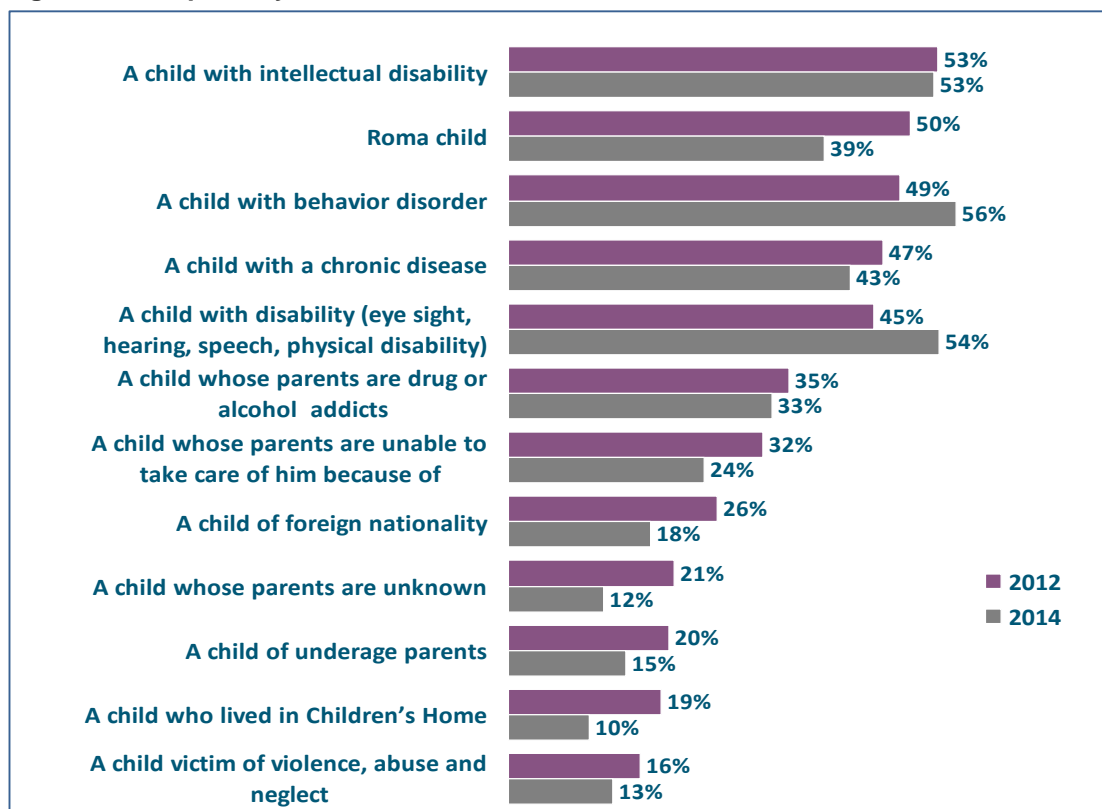
Before the campaign (2012)		After the campaign (May 2014)	
Children in foster care		Children in foster care	
non-kinship	14	non-kinship	30
kinship	307	kinship	320
total	321	total	350
Foster families		Foster families	
non-kinship	10	non-kinship	21
kinship	220	kinship	224
total	230	total	245

Source: UNICEF Montenegro, data available at 15 May 2014

The Strategy for the Development of Fostering 2012-2016 plans a number of 50 children from institutions in foster families by 2016, which is by and large consistent with the 57 children in need of fostering i.e. 30 children from Children's Home 'Mladost' whose individual care plans have fostering as a goal, 4 children from Ljubovic and 23 Montenegrin children living in residential institutions in Serbia. At the moment, **around 30% of the estimated need for fostering is covered as a result of the Project; however, the actual need might be even higher given the additional number of children who are at risk of being abandoned and for whom emergency foster care is needed.** At the time of our visit in Bijelo Polje, a municipality with no non-kinship foster carers in the past, there were 7 candidates in the process of assessment and this situation is similar in other municipalities, indicating the fact that the full effect of the campaign is still to be seen in the coming months and that there are good chances for the need to be covered in a more significant way.

Most problematic is however the fostering of children with disabilities, reflecting to a wider extent the situation registered in 'Mladost'. Indeed, no such child has been fostered as a result of the campaign and efforts are needed in the future to reach the target set out in the Strategy i.e. 10 children with disabilities placed in foster families by 2016. Disability is one of the factors which decreases the interest for fostering, as shown by the results of KAP 2014 (see Figure 8, response the Question *If you decided to be a foster parent, do you think you would be able to take care of...?*)

Figure 8. Acceptability of Foster Care of Children with Various Characteristics – not acceptable



Source: Ipsos Strategic Marketing (2014), "Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Survey"

Another matter of concern is the sustainability of fostering, which is discussed in the following section of the report.

3.5 Sustainability

Evaluation of Project sustainability considered the following evaluation questions:

Did the Project design include an appropriate sustainability strategy to support positive changes for the most vulnerable groups after the end of the intervention?
What is the level of ownership of the reform process within the MoLSW and local self-governments and what are the prospects for further development of related interventions after the end of external support?
To what extent the legislative framework developed and policy documents produced provide a ground for sustainable and coordinated service provision for the most vulnerable and excluded children and their families?
To what extent national level mechanisms strengthened for monitoring and capacities improved for reporting on child-care reforms are likely to continue being effective beyond the project time-frame?
To what extent are new knowledge and skills integrated into regular activities of professionals working with children without parental care, with disability and their families, regardless of whether they work as service providers or case-managers in centres for social work?
To what extent has the Project promoted strengthening of already existing partnerships and establishment of new ones and to strengthening of inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation both at the national and local level?

The DoA includes a detailed sustainability chapter, which presents concrete actions and responsibilities to ensure sustainability of results, based on key working principles of ownership building, empowerment and development of local capacities, inclusive and active engagement of all key stakeholders (central and local, public and private) in the implementation of project activities and clear sharing of technical and financial responsibilities.

As far as **ownership** is concerned, **the MoLSW has been entrusted the role of leading, planning, monitoring and overseeing the project implementation** (rather than relying on external assistance), through the coordination of Steering Committee and its Technical Group as well as working groups developing the policy and legal framework, transformation planning of residential care institutions and mobilisation of other line ministries (education, health, finance), oversight bodies and local NGOs in the implementation of project activities. **Political commitment for the reform supported by the Project boosted with the appointment of the new MoLSW leadership early 2013.** The new Minister and his team managed to include the setting up of the most-needed Institute for Social and Child Welfare in the new law adopted in 2013 (which raised long discussions and negotiations with the MoF and did not figure in the first draft submitted to the Parliament) and to fundraise for the continuation of reform with the Government and the EU, with the full support of NIPAC, UNICEF and UNDP.

The ownership of the reform process is also confirmed by the participation of self-governments in the Project and their spending plans for child care services in the target municipalities. Almost all people that were consulted for this evaluation are aware, at various degrees, of the reform, new legal provisions, new services, and are willing to enthusiastically share their views on the achieved progress and further challenges, indicating that *“The Project has created a momentum for reform, based on a large national agreement about its necessity”*, as declared by one of key informants.

The Project has engaged a large number of stakeholders and developed strategic partnerships with focus on intersectoral cooperation and coordination for the prevention of abandonment of children left without parental care and children with disability. A Protocol between the main relevant line ministries (MoLSW, MoE, MoH) has been signed recently. Joint training courses for professionals from the three sectors were delivered as well as for the multidisciplinary COCSEN. The Steering Committee of the Project has also ensured cross-sector dissemination of information and joint decision-making in matters which are essential for the reform. Partnerships have been also developed for financing the expansion of service provision, based on Memoranda of Understanding between the MoLSW, municipalities, CSWs and UNICEF. **More intersectoral work is however needed especially between actors at local level to ensure an effective referral system, active inclusion of vulnerable parents, and more efficient partnerships between the CSWs, residential care institutions, employment office, NGOs and beneficiaries (children and parents).** Grass-roots NGOs, which represent 80.5% of service providers according to the mapping of social protection services carried out by UNDP in 2012, have not been systematically and sufficiently consulted and involved in project implementation. Strengthening these NGOs and cooperation with CSWs would contribute to better coverage of need and ultimately more sustainable service provision.

The support of the Project for the modernisation of **policy and legal framework** has been described at length in the effectiveness section of the report. It has been pointed out that a new Law, aligned with international human rights standards, has been adopted in 2013 and 60% (3 out of 5) of the drafted by-laws (rulebooks) have so far been adopted, while others are in various stages of preparation. Moreover, the Project has also contributed to the development and improvement of new strategies (on fostering and on social and child protection) and action plan for child protection.

The new policy and legal framework governing the child care system is supportive for the further development of sustainable and coordinated service provision for the most vulnerable children and their families. Due to the adoption of the foster care standards, the fostering procedures (assessment, training, licensing, monitoring of foster carers) are now clearly regulated and introduced in the work of CSWs. As well, family counselling has been introduced as a specialisation

within the centres. As mentioned in the relevance section, the legal developments supported by the Project were aligned with other relevant legal provisions and strategies, including the EU accession strategies driving the policy agenda of the country. The Project has been embedded in a longer term process of change; it triggered reform and was fully integrated into the Government efforts to develop a sustainable rights-based social and child protection system: *“The Government identified the continuation of reforms as a top priority”* (key informant representing an international partner).

In order to ensure a favourable institutional framework for the enforcement of the new laws, rulebooks and strategies and based on the assessment of the CSWs done by the Project, the MoLSW has taken measures to rationalise the network of CSWs in order to ensure a better coverage of population (see Figure 1) and to improve the professional structure of the centres. Systematisation of workplaces and revision of job profiles in the CSWs are expected by the end of September 2014. It is expected that new staff with higher education in social work and psychology will be recruited to improve the quality of assessment, planning, counselling, direct work with beneficiaries and monitoring, and most notably case management, which has not been introduced yet in the system. A training course has been delivered and a more advanced one is planned until the end of the Project. However, irrespective of how useful these trainings and how appropriate the methodologies and working tools, **without a proper staffing of the CSWs case management will not be effective.** With only two social workers in the CSW for a population of 50,000 people and plenty of MO beneficiaries, as in one of the municipalities visited on site, direct work with children and their families and effective case management is not possible. **The rationalisation of the network and systematisation of workplaces will need to carefully consider these realities.** This is very much needed also in the light of sustainability of solutions provided to children in need.

During the field phase, for instance, the evaluation team was informed by several key informants that **there were instances when fostered children were brought back to the institution and that there were cases of foster families who have not been properly assisted by the CSW after the child was put in foster care.** As one of the interviewed stakeholders put it: *“First month in foster care is not pink, neither for the child nor for the parent”* and better matching, monitoring and support are needed from the CSW. Non-kinship fostering might also be endangered on long run by the lack of social insurance for the foster carers. In many EU countries (e.g. Austria, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Romania, etc.), foster care is a profession and foster carers are employed by the social welfare services on the basis of a labour contract⁵⁸, being thus covered by social insurance as any employee. Montenegro opted for some level of professionalization of the foster care (assessment, training, licensing, quality standards); however, there are various views among the national stakeholders concerning the status of the foster care i.e. on one side, the opinion that foster care is a ‘profession’ (as in most of EU member states) that needs to be regulated according to the labour legislation; on the other side, the opinion that foster care is not a job, but rather a humanitarian support for children in need (like in Sweden), although a compensation for work is paid to the foster parents.

What is nevertheless important to ensure is the quality and sustainability of the support solutions, hence the need to put in place a performant monitoring and reporting system of individual and national level. In this respect, the Project assisted in the introduction of a child protection database, allowing a better monitoring of individual cases, but also aggregated reporting at national level based on a set of indicators developed by the consultants contracted by the Project. The database is a powerful evidence-based monitoring tool, very useful for planning and implementation of reform of child protection. At the moment, **it is not clear to what extent the child protection**

⁵⁸ Laklija, M. (2011), “Foster care models in Europe. Results of a conducted survey”, Zagreb

database could be integrated into the upcoming Social Card⁵⁹, the opinions of stakeholders being split. Individual monitoring of children in residential care and benefiting from DCCs is also done through the revision of the individual care plans which have been already discussed in the previous section of the report. **Once functional, it is expected that the Institute for Social and Child Protection will ensure the monitoring and supervision of social work in the CSWs and general quality assurance.** The foreseen Social Inspection planned to be set up in the second part of 2014 within the General Inspectorate of the Government and employ three social inspectors will have a controlling function. Since then, these roles will continue to be played by the MoLSW also through regular meetings with CSWs.

In the effectiveness section above, it was pointed out that UNICEF, as main implementation partner of the MoLSW in the Project, planned and conducted a large **capacity building programme**, including training courses and on-the-job technical assistance for learning purposes. According to the findings of the evaluation team, most professionals who benefitted of these learning opportunities report positive experience from the trainings in terms of knowledge acquisition and skills development. The usefulness of the trainings was especially highlighted by the professionals working in DCCs, for example the physiotherapists, psychologists and members of COCSENs who commended the training on working with, respectively assessment methodologies of children with autism and which they now use in their current work. **The CSWs have also reported that the knowledge and skills acquired during the training courses on family counselling and foster care and for which a part of them have been certified, are embedded in the usual work routine with beneficiary children and parents.** The mapping exercise was particularly useful for the staff of CSW as they gained knowledge on the available services they could refer the children in need and their families. The knowledge acquired following the participation in various working groups and trainings was helpful for the management of 'Mladost' in developing the draft Plan for the Transformation of institution.

Based on the comments of parents, it could be concluded that the staff of DCCs are well qualified, use proper methods of working with their children and empowered the parents' with skills and knowledge for providing basic therapy to children at home after returning from the DCC.

Despite this overall progress, the stakeholders have not achieved the required level of capacity both: a) at strategic, managerial level where the support of the Project was not optimal and which is also confronted by insufficient staff (social and child protection department, legal department within the MoLSW), **and b) at operational level, in CSWs**, where case management - crucial for gatekeeping - has not been introduced yet (currently under preparation) and where capacity for assessment and monitoring of foster carers is limited. At the moment, **there is no system in place for ensuring continuous professional development and accurate assessment of staff performance.** The foreseen Institute for Social and Child Protection will have this role, including licensing of professionals and accreditation of the training programmes. The training curricula/programmes developed by the Project will be subject to accreditation, thus able to be further used for the training of professionals as well as for the training of foster parents in order to be licensed.

As far as financial sustainability is concerned, there have been some important sustainability features of the Project to be highlighted:

⁵⁹ Social Card will be an electronic system for processing, approval, record-keeping, payments and monitoring of access to social transfers that will improve the current work processes in CSW and access to services for poor and vulnerable people

- **coverage of salaries and running costs of the Institute of Social and Child Protection** (14 employees) once in operation (most likely in the second part of 2014), by the budget of the MoLSW (as confirmed by the ministry's officials interviewed by the evaluation team);
- **budget allocation for financing service provision**, planned to be managed by a special Division within the Directorate for Social and Child Protection in the MoLSW (3 employees) – it will ensure support to municipalities and service providers to expand and diversify services at local level;
- **the formula used in covering the costs for setting up and running of the DCCs and SGHs** (as part of the child protection system), based on a joint contribution of the MoLSW and municipality, and supported by the Project only in its initial establishment phase seems to be a good model – a funding model relying exclusively on municipality funding, as in Serbia for instance, has proved to be a big challenge especially for poor municipalities;
- inclusion in the new Law on social and child protection, whose development was supported by the Project, of **specific clauses on “activation” of social welfare beneficiaries** to participate in the implementation of measures that ensure their social inclusion based on an individual plan of activation, as well as the obligation of the CSWs to cooperate with the employment agency for the social inclusion of beneficiaries of financial support capable of work – these stipulations are in line with the EC concept of “active inclusion”⁶⁰ based on the three-pillar mechanism of *income support – employment – accessible services* and are very useful for the sustainable inclusion of parents (including kinship foster carers) of vulnerable children and prevention of child abandonment;
- **design of Transformation Plan of Children's Home ‘Mladost’ based on an approach which makes full use of internal resources** of the institution for developing alternative services - the plan is not yet adopted and requires further work, as explained in the effectiveness section of the report, but the guiding philosophy has clear cost-effectiveness and sustainability features.

At the same time, the mapping of local child protections services, carried out in 2012 by a Project consultant, showed that only some municipalities (e.g. Podgorica, Niksic, Danilovgrad) budgeted for social protection measures, while others mainly provided social welfare transfers to individuals. The ROM 2014 mentions that in previous years several DCCs encountered a funding problem related to staff and running costs and used the funds provided by the Government for each child. These aspects draw the attention to the **need for better planning of the service provision, a more informed selection of the best option of care with preference for the most cost-effective one and possible contribution of parents to the service cost.**

Continuation of reform is dependent upon external funding, given austerity spending measures taken by the Government. As mentioned in the context section of the report, the Government strategies and action plans in the area of social and child protection are not budgeted. The EU has confirmed the allocation of gap funding through the bridging project and IPA 2, totalling 1.8 million EUR. **External support is crucial for the continuation of reforms especially at local level until rights-based foundations of practices and procedures are built and capacities are in place to ensure that laws and systems run effectively.** As concluded by a key informant: “*Investment in children is the most intelligent investment*”.

⁶⁰ European Commission (2008), “Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, Brussels, C(2008) 5737

3.6 Human rights and cross-cutting issues

Evaluation of the extent to which the Project contributed to the promotion of human rights and other cross-cutting issues was based on the following evaluation questions:

Has the project actively contributed to the promotion of child rights?
To what extent and how has the Project ensured an equity focus?
To what extent and how has the project integrated gender equality into its design and implementation?
Was the design of the Project ethical? How was the balance of cost and benefits to participants (including possible negative impact) considered during the Project implementation?

The Project has been guided by and systematically monitored based on the overarching human rights *principles of non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion*. The *principles of rule of law* and use of *maximum available resources* were implicit in the implementation and monitoring of the Project. The *participation principle* was better represented at the level of parents, in their double capacity of duty-bearers and rights-holders, by engaging them in various Project activities (in working groups, trainings, campaign, design of LPA in Cetinje) individually or via associations of parents. **Participation of children (including institutionalised children⁶¹), as rights-holders, was however limited** to the production of one-minute junior videos, some of them being used in the fostering campaign. Neither parents nor children have been meaningfully engaged in the design, revision and implementation of individual care plans.

The Project had an important contribution to the implementation of the *principle of progressive realisation of children's rights* which was also part of the monitoring of human rights principles in general. It did so through: promoting children's rights in the revised policy and legal framework; assessment and analytical work to provide evidence on the needs and rights of vulnerable children (children in institutions, children with disabilities, etc.); improving the inter-sectoral cooperation and the implementation of mechanism of early detection of children and families at risk; opening access of families at risk to child abandonment prevention services and day care; developing the understanding and capacity of professionals, as duty-bearers, on their role in providing quality services for child protection in line with newly-adopted quality standards for service provision; raising awareness of the wider public on the harms of institutionalisation and alternative forms of care.

The Project addressed the human rights-based need for deinstitutionalisation and living in a family environment, by promoting family-based care in biological family or foster care as well as access to DCCs to prevent abandonment and institutionalisation. As a consequence, significant shifts have occurred in thinking about the meaning and consequences of institutionalisation of children and about child rights norms and biases related to institutionalised children, as acknowledged by the numerous stakeholders consulted for the purpose of this evaluation. However, sustainable outcomes require changes of practices and ingrained cultural norms and values, which will need further efforts and time to fully take on. At the same time, deinstitutionalisation and family reunification requires an efficient and accessible network of services able to support families to raise the child (financial security, a family environment free of violence, abuse and neglect).

The *empowerment principle* worked very well at the level of duty-bearers, notably professionals working in CSWs, DCCs, residential care institutions, health system and COCSEN. There has been insufficient focus on equipping the weakest parents with the

⁶¹ Out of 20 participants, 2 of them were children without parental care residing in Children's Home 'Mladost' in Bijela, while other 2 children were living with their father in Podgorica after years spent in the same institution.

knowledge and abilities to claim and fully exercise their rights, apart from some unplanned empowerment effect on parents using the DCCs, as presented in the previous sections of the report. This is an important aspect of the Human Rights-Based Approach in the programming of UN support which requires better attention in the future. In the particular case of this Project, the evaluation team has been informed about parents whose children could benefit of services provided by the DCCs, but they are resistant to use them mainly due to misinformation about their rights (e.g. fear that they will lose the financial benefits provided by the CSWs in case their children will use the DCC). Based on data provided by the management of Children's Home 'Mladost', during the period 2011-2013, there were several occurrences of children being returned to 'Mladost' after being placed in biological family (9 children in two families) or in foster family (4 children in three families), including one child under the age of three. These facts require **better assessment by the CSWs of alternative care solutions for children in institutions and development of the network of services, but at the same time much more investment in empowering parents (biological, foster, adoptive) to ensure sustainable protection of children.**

The Project planned to ensure an equity focus by orienting EU grant and domestic investment towards the most under-developed and at-need municipalities of the country as well as by focusing its intervention on the most vulnerable: children without parental care, particularly those under 3, children with disability and their families. The evaluation team considers that the Project has in most cases succeeded to do so.

The UNCRC describes the biological family as "the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, particularly children" (art.16) and acknowledges the responsibility of parents for the upbringing of children. However, it also recognises that being with family may not always be in the best interest of the child. For these cases, the UNCRC states that these children have a right to be placed in suitable, quality alternative care. **Children deprived of parental care who are in long-term residential institutions are at risk of impaired cognitive, social and emotional development (particularly for those below the age of three). These children were in the focus of the Project through various activities primarily looking into their deinstitutionalization.** Different alternative care options were promoted, most notably non-kinship fostering, resulting in significant increase of children in this form of care compared to the baseline (from 14 children to 31 children in only three months after the campaign). According to the MoLSW, UNICEF and other key informants, non-kinship (professional) fostering is very much needed especially for deinstitutionalisation of children residing in Children's Home 'Mladost' and for preventing abandonment of children aged 0-3 in line with the new law. From this perspective, the Project has addressed a crucial need.

At the same time, one should remember that the vast majority of fostered children (320 children) are living in kinship care (224 families), including most fostered children with disability. **There are no studies or data on the status of kinship caregivers in Montenegro. The interviews with foster parents (individually and through focus groups) have however signalled that the kinship foster parents have to overcome more challenges than non-kinship ones.** It seems that kinship foster parents receive less supervision and fewer services than non-kinship foster parents, even though their needs for support may be greater. At the same time, the selection of carers is less rigorous in order to give preference to kinship carers. **There are many cases of informal kinship care, thus 'invisible' to the system of child protection resulting in the loss of fair financial support for raising the child** (see Box 4). It is assumed that the implementation of the by-law on foster care, adopted in April 2014, will improve the situation through the introduction of clear eligibility standards for foster carers as well as standards for CSWs to provide proper assessment and support to foster carers.

Box 4. Life Stories of Kinship Foster Parents

M. is around 45, is employed and lives in Podgorica with her son and her husband. M. has a sister who is the mother of a girl. The sister was imprisoned several years ago and left her daughter in the care of M. The father of the girl left for Serbia and has not contacted his daughter since. M. has been taking care of her niece for many years. She was afraid to go the CSW and report the situation because she believed that “they will take her away from me”. When the sister went to prison, no official from judiciary or from the prison has signalled the CSW that a minor was left without parental care and urgent support was needed.

P. is a pensioner who lives in Cetinje. She has three children of her own. She has been taking care for 15 years of a girl, the 7th child of her niece who wanted to institutionalise her because of poverty. P. registered as kinship foster carer in March 2011, when she became a pensioner and 13 years since she took in care the girl, following advice from a nephew who “heard that some support from the state might be available”. The CSW was not aware of this situation until 2011.

M. is 18 years old. He lives in Podgorica with his twin brothers and his mother who is very ill. One of the twins is enrolled in a special education school and spends only the weekends with the family. M. is the legal guardian of the twins. His father abandoned the family in 2012. M. confessed that he is unsure how to deal with his new parenting duties, to nurture and protect the twins in his care. He would like to continue his education, have a job, be with friends of his age, but he can't because he has to stay at home and take care of the twins and the ill mother. He is unaware if CSW could help him.

Two grandmothers from Podgorica, with grandchildren in their care, reported that they have not received a response from the authorities for the last 5-7 months to an appeal for the restoration of the foster carer status and associated financial support. They were active in the foster parents club where they learnt that contact with the parents of the children should be maintained as much as possible. According to their opinion, this proactive interest of them resulted in a hasty assessment of the CSW concluding that parents had the capacity to raise their children. With the fostering status denied, the financial support has been discontinued, but actually the children continue to be under the care of grandmothers as their parents proved to be incapable and unwilling to do it. Still, the grandmothers do not receive any financial support and their appeal remained unanswered for a long time. At the moment of the field visit, they have still not received any response.

Source: Individual interviews and focus groups in Cetinje and Podgorica

The Project brought about increased access of children with disabilities to services i.e. from 30 children benefitting of day care services in 2010 to 69 children in April 2014⁶². As most children with disability live in Podgorica and following the mid-term evaluation in 2012, **a decision has been taken by the PSC to reallocate a part of Project funding from grants to rehabilitation work for the DCC in Podgorica. This decision represents a sound example of priority given to human rights in the budget and implementation of the Project.**

Although no “hard” data is available, experience from the field indicates that the **beneficiaries of DCCs are usually children and youth with severe and combined disability and often from vulnerable families.** Based on the status of the parents who participated in the focus groups and on the feedback received from directors of two DCCs visited on site, it seems that **most parents are unemployed, are MO recipients and have only secondary education, indicating that children of vulnerable parents benefit the most from DCCs.** There are no compiled data at the level of all DCCs on the educational structure and employment status of the parents, income level,

⁶² The total number of beneficiaries, including children and young people, increased from 54 to 127 between end 2010 and April 2014.

biological/foster parents, size of the family, residence, etc. to allow an in-depth analysis of the vulnerability profile of the parents/families.

As the goal was to ensure support especially to the most marginalized children with disability and their families as well as to children without parental care, the Project has strived to train service providers on quality service provision and standards. In this respect, **the design of the Project and its activities had a strong equity focus.** It is very important to highlight that, although not planned initially, the Project has also addressed the needs of Montenegrin children residing in Serbia, through improvement of individual care plans and planning service provision to facilitate return to their motherland. In general, **all studies, assessments, reports, training curricula and other deliverables produced by the Project with the specialised assistance of UNICEF are equity-focused.**

As far as gender equality is concerned, the DoA, its Logframe and the ToC do not include any reference to gender issues. The formulation of target groups and of Project indicators is gender-blind. Progress reports do not report gender disaggregated data nor they contain specific discussion on any possible gender issues raised during the implementation of the Project. The **indicators which could be retrieved based on the entries recorded in the national database on child protection, introduced with the support of the Project, are not gender disaggregated either**, as explained in the previous section of the report. Without such data and baselines and targets, it was difficult to measure the achievements of the Project in terms of equal opportunities and gender equality and the evaluation team has requested information in this regard.

Based on information provided by UNICEF, it was noted that **82% (279 trainees) of the total number of participants⁶³ in the training courses delivered by the Project were women.** The project management team and the working groups involved in the modernisation of the policy and legal framework were mainly composed of women. During the site visits, the evaluation team observed that the workforce of CSWs, DCCs and Children's Home 'Mladost' is female dominated. It means that the 53 positions (net employment effect) created as a result of newly set up DCCs have been also primarily occupied by women. Through the capacity building activities, **the Project contributed to the promotion of gender equality given the gender structure of the sector, rather than as a result of a specific gender-sensitive strategy.**

The group composition of children involved in producing "One-Minute Juniors"⁶⁴ on the right of the child to a family environment (13 girls, 7 boys) reflected the predominant interest of girls for the issue.

As far as end beneficiaries are concerned, the data provided by UNICEF indicate that 29 girls and 40 boys with disability benefit of the services provided by the DCCs supported by the Project. **This gender imbalance might reflect the higher number of boys in the overall number of children with disability across the country. There are no reliable data in this respect** and gender-disaggregated data related to decisions of COCSENs orienting children to DCCs⁶⁵ would have been a pretty good proxy indicator; however they were not made available to the evaluators despite repeated requests to the MoE. **Without knowing the total number of children with disability in Montenegro and their gender distribution, and without having a gender-based vulnerability profile of these**

⁶³ To be noted that some trainees participated in 2 or more training courses. The figure refers to all participations, but the actual number of trainees is lower. The figure does not include the training organised by DCC Igalo (November 2012) and the capacity building monitoring visits to 18 COCSENs (May-July 2012), as reported data are not gender-disaggregated.

⁶⁴ Project implemented in cooperation with NGO "Forum MNE", based on a PCA signed with UNICEF.

⁶⁵ The only gender-disaggregated data were provided by UNICEF (based on direct data collection from commissions) and they refer to the COCSENs referrals generally (no breakdown of decisions per normal school, special education and DCC).

children, it is difficult to judge to what extent gender mainstreaming has been ensured in the provision of day care services.

Disaggregated figures about children residing in Children's Home 'Mladost' were kindly compiled and provided to the evaluation team by the management of the institution. Their response to this specific request was fairly prompt, bearing in mind that they didn't have such data readily available. Figures shows an overrepresentation of boys in the institution in all years, reaching at the beginning of 2014 a proportion of 58.7% of all children residing in the children's home.

The analysis of in-flows (new admissions, returns to institution) and out-flows (departures from the institution) over the period 2011-2013, which was done based on the data provided by Children's Home 'Mladost' does not evidentiate a propensity of admissions and departures much more favourable for girls, but rather a gender-balanced flow. It means that the overrepresentation of boys in the institution is mainly linked to an 'inherited' male-dominant structure of residents. From this perspective, **the assistance provided by the Project since 2011 was equitable both for girls and boys living in the children's home.**

In general, the design of the Project was ethical and benefits for children and parents, as rights holders, are already visible. There are however circumstances when **benefits could have been higher, especially in the case of children with disability and developmental needs** (children residing in 'Komanski Most', in 'Mladost', beneficiaries of DCCs), as extensively detailed in this section of the report, but also in the previous effectiveness and impact sections. More benefits will however materialise once the new law and quality standards are fully implemented and once the transformation plan of Children's Home 'Mladost' is put in practice. **Given its profound UNCRC-oriented nature of the Project, its budget is fully rights-based.**

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

The Project is **highly relevant** for Montenegro's child care reform and national policies for improving the well-being of children and realisation of children's rights as it addressed the top priorities of the reform. The Project is in line with country's Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System and the Plan of Action for Children while its primary objectives are tied to the implementation of the recently adopted Law on Social and Child Protection. It is highly relevant for Montenegro's international commitments deriving from the ratification of the UNCRC, CEDAW, OPCAT and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its status of EU candidate country, and aligned with EU and UNICEF country priorities. The Project addressed the most pressing needs for child deinstitutionalisation and prevention of child abandonment through inter-sectoral cooperation, as identified in the domestic and international reports and planning documents. It remained relevant in time, as documented by reports, policy documents and strategies adopted or under implementation during its lifetime. The multi-pronged approach (including working on policies and legislation, developing methodologies and tools, capacity building, investment in social infrastructure) and highly-participatory approaches used in the implementation of the Project were appropriate in view of the underlying ToC and its key assumptions.

The Project was **effective** in achieving most of its planned results. MoLSW's partnership with UNICEF, line ministries, professionals and NGOs allowed for effective and coordinated development and modernisation of policy and legal framework. The Project introduced a clear focus on the child rights and equity in the policy agenda and thus contributed to the acceleration of efforts to address outstanding CRC observations. Capacities of professionals working in child protection were improved. Access of vulnerable children, children without parental care and children with disabilities to alternative family and community-based services was increased, while work practices and approach of children's needs in 'Komanski Most' Institute and Children's Home 'Mladost' were modernised. The Project contributed to behaviour change towards family-based solutions and speeded up the pace of reform by pushing the development of quality standards, professionalization of staff and development of alternatives to child institutionalisation. The major factors which increased the Project effectiveness are the EU accession process which drives the policy agenda in the country, a reform-oriented new leadership of the MoLSW and high level expertise of UNICEF. Limited capacity building provided to the managerial levels of reform, small, understaffed social and child protection and legal departments within the MoLSW, public intolerance towards children with disability, economic crisis and elections hampered the achievement of some planned results i.e. adoption of full set of by-laws deriving from the new law, setting up of the Institute for Social and Child Protection aimed to ensure professional development and quality assurance in the social and child welfare system, establishment of SGHs.

The Project has been implemented with **various degrees of efficiency**. It aimed to put the building blocks of a complex reform in the child protection system and to assist the Government in its first years of implementation. From this perspective, the goal of the Project was too ambitious for the set timeframe, available resources and the particular context of Montenegro. The late adoption of the Law on Social and Child Protection delayed, in chain, many other Project activities. At the same time, the strategy used by the Project to ensure full involvement of the Government and local stakeholders at every stage of the process meant that the original timeframe for some activities was overambitious and required rescheduling. Despite these delays, the output performance is in line with the intervention logic, outputs are of good quality and accessible to relevant stakeholders, and the overall results of the Project are significant. The Project had an outstanding efficiency feature as it invested in the prevention of child institutionalisation, which is the most expensive form of alternative care with

dramatic negative consequences upon the normal development of a child. Project management was conducted professionally, with high quality and commitment from UNICEF, results orientation, rigorous monitoring and excellent quality of reporting of progress against set targets.

The project had a **good impact** level, making a major contribution to increasing the number of vulnerable children benefiting from family and community-based services. The findings indicate a spectacular reduction (98.2%) of children under the age of three in the Children's Home 'Mladost', the largest residential care institution in the country as well as more than two times increase in the number of children in non-kinship care, due to the change in public awareness and attitudes regarding family-based alternatives for children without parental care. The Project had thus a beneficial contribution to the progressive realisation of children's right to grow up in a family environment. As a result of new day care services established by the Project, the number of children with disabilities benefitting of this service more than doubled. The beneficiary families reported significant improvements in the quality of life for their children and family members as a result of service establishment. Deinstitutionalisation of children from 'Komanski Most' Institute was partially achieved due to factors which were mostly outside the control of the Project. Impact would have been higher in case the SGHs were ready in time for taking over the children from 'Komanski Most', there was a stronger push of the MoLSW for deinstitutionalisation, the organisation of DCCs allowed more tailored approaches towards the special needs of each child (age, type of disability) and individual care plans of institutionalised children were done with full participation of parents and children themselves, to the extent possible.

Most effects and outcomes of the Project are **likely sustainable**, given modernized policy and legislative framework, which provides the ground for sustainable and coordinated service provision for the most vulnerable and excluded children and their families. The Project was embedded in a longer term process of change for developing a sustainable rights-based child protection system. Newly-adopted standards, guidebooks, manuals and protocols are already in use or could easily be used for future establishment of similar services. New knowledge and skills on family counselling and fostering are integrated into the regular activities of professionals working with vulnerable children. Still, the CSWs have not achieved the required level of capacity and case management - crucial for gatekeeping – is in its first phase of implementation. Quality assurance, accreditation of training programmes, licensing of professionals and sustainable professional development are dependant on the setting up of the foreseen Institute for Social and Child Protection. Transformation of residential care institutions into resource centres is in the planning phase. The child protection database introduced by the Project provides sustainable ground for strengthened monitoring and reporting, but integration into the upcoming Social Card is unclear. The reform benefits of MoLSW commitment and overall ownership of national stakeholders, facilitated by strategic inter-sectoral partnerships. Although the Government allocated own funding for institutional building and development of services, continuation of reform is dependent upon external funding.

The Project had a major contribution to the promotion and realisation of **child rights** by ensuring a high profile of human rights standards in the revised legal framework and policy documents. It also expanded access to family and community-based services of the most vulnerable children and had a positive contribution to the strengthening of the capacity of a wide range of Montenegrin duty-bearers to protect and fulfil the children's rights to grow in a family environment. However, there was insufficient focus on equipping the weakest parents with the knowledge and abilities to claim and fully exercise their rights. The Project managed to ensure an **equity focus** by orienting EU and domestic investment towards the most vulnerable children and their families through equity-focused methodologies and programming approaches. The Project has contributed to the promotion of **gender equality** given the female-dominated social and child sector, rather than as a result of a gender-sensitive strategy. Gender disaggregation of data in project documents would have allowed a more in-

depth analysis of Project achievements on gender equality. Overall, the design of the Project was ethical and benefits for children and parents, as rights holders, are already visible. More benefits will materialise once the new law and quality standards are fully implemented.

4.2 Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

4.2.1 Recommendations

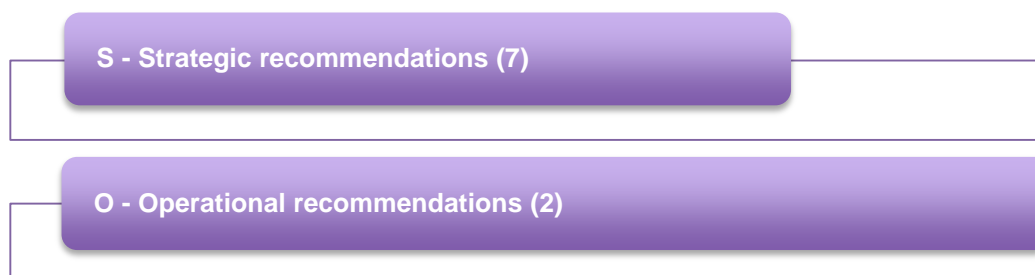
The recommendations presented in Table 14 below are based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation as well as on consultation with all key stakeholders that were interviewed during the field phase. Each interview, focus group and discussion group has checked the perceptions of various stakeholders (MoLSW, UNICEF, EUD, line ministries, Ombudsman, Parliament, municipalities, professionals, CSWs, service beneficiaries, parents and children, NGOs) concerning the top priorities of the child protection reform in Montenegro that needs to be addressed in the coming years and consequently the role each of these stakeholders should play (see Interview Guides in Annex 6).

Validation of recommendations was done in two phases: 1) by the MoLSW and UNICEF, following submission of the draft report; and 2) by other key stakeholders (line ministries, Union of Municipalities, EUD, UNDP, CSWs, CSOs), during a public presentation of the results of the evaluation on 4 July 2014. The feedback received from all stakeholders was incorporated in the final evaluation report, ensuring that recommendations reflected these multiple perspectives and buy-in for future implementation.

The evaluation team acknowledges the foreseen additional IPA support (Bridging and IPA 2) for the continuation of reforms in social and child protection. The draft programming documents shared by the MoLSW consist of various support actions aimed: to support the MoLSW and its partners to finalise the development of secondary legislation; to improve the capacity of MoLSW to better lead, plan implement and monitor the reform process; to assist in the setting up and functioning of the Institute for Social and Child Protection, Division for the Development of Social and Child Protection Services and Social Inspection; to develop service provision, including new services to be provided by the transformed Children's Home 'Mladost'; and to further strengthen the capacities of CSWs. The evaluation team considers that these action areas envisaged by further IPA support are legitimate and fully justified by the needs of the system and of its beneficiaries at national and local levels.

The recommendations below build upon the foreseen areas of IPA support and also attempt to bring to light additional issues which needs to be addressed for a successful continuation of the child care reforms in the country.

Recommendations are divided into two categories, as follows:



Each recommendation has an addressee and a proposed timing.

Table 14. List of Recommendations

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
Strategic Recommendations (S)			
S1	<p>Further develop the capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to better lead, plan, implement and monitor the process of social and child protection reforms</p> <p>Findings detailed in the context, effectiveness, impact and sustainability sections of the report as well as by the mid-term evaluation in 2012 indicate that capacity building for the central managerial level of the reform of social and child protection system is crucial. The MoLSW, which is leading the reforms, needs strengthened capacity to pursue a successful change of the system, notably in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) evidence-based policy making using the information gathered through the child protection database (also envisaged in EU Bridging) and the set of indicators developed by the Project, but also based on additional research of vulnerable children (see S6); b) child deinstitutionalisation: principles, setting targets, planning, prioritising, facilitation of change in the relationship between the institutional care and family and community-based alternative forms of care; c) rights-based approaches to budgeting of strategic measures and reform activities (national strategies and action plans), as already envisaged in IPA 2 draft document; design of cost-effective policies, programmes and services, based on credible cost-effectiveness analysis highlighting the medium and long-term financial impact of various options and net benefits; d) management of the financial aspects of the reform, i.e. reallocation of costs from institutional care to community and family based-care in accordance with the principle 'money follows the client', securing the 'transition' costs); e) risks identification and management (including estimates of risk costs) to be able to prevent and cope with possible factors and events that might jeopardise the implementation of strategies, legislation, policies and programmes, such as delays in the adoption of laws, insufficient funding, macro-economic constraints, resistance to change of stakeholders. <p>Apart from these capacity building measures, the MoLSW would much benefit of improved staffing of the social and child welfare department and of the legal department given the complexity of the reforms and the very intense efforts which will be required in the coming years for the continuation of reforms until</p>	MoLSW, with the support of UNICEF, UNDP, EU	mid 2014- mid 2016

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	sustainable prerequisites are in place for a performant, rights-based child protection system. The functional review of the social and child protection department of the MoLSW, envisaged to be done in the EU Bridging) will provide a good basis for concrete recommendations on the strengthening the MoLSW's social and child protection department in terms of its organization and professional capacities.		
S2	<p>Strengthen the managerial capacity of Centres for Social Work in order to support successful implementation of reforms at local level</p> <p>Centres for Social Work are key pillars of a performant and inclusive social and child protection system and benchmarks of leadership and professional work are needed for uniform performance across the country. The reform is in its first years of implementation and it will take many additional years until sustainable change is in place and a rights-based governance of CSWs will be functional. Capacity building for the local managerial levels of reform was not optimal, as per findings in the effectiveness section of the report. A leadership and management development programme is recommended to be implemented as soon as possible to equip the managers of CSWs with the required key knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for leading the reform at local level and ensuring a high level of motivation and commitment among the staff. An important training topic of the programme should be the use of child protection database for decision-making purposes, as one of the areas in need of capacity building (see effectiveness section of the report), as envisaged by the EU Bridging. It is recommended that the programme consists of modules spread over a duration of several months to avoid major disruption of activity in the centres, but also allow time between modules to practice what the managers learnt and report their experience back to their peers. Some sessions could be done jointly with the MoLSW officials for 'vertical' fertilisation of ideas and practices. The programme should be as practical and flexible as possible, carried out in a 'blended learning' format, which combines classroom-type classes with on-the-job training, coaching, exchange of experience among peers, study visits, on-line modules and a 'summer school'.</p>	MoLSW, training providers, with the assistance of UNICEF, UNDP and EU	2014-2015
S3	<p>Accelerate the development of a strong cadre of social workers and a culture of lifelong learning within the Centres for Social Work to ensure that they keep pace with reforms and are empowered to address the needs of beneficiaries at high professional standards</p> <p>Social workers are at the heart of a successful reform in child care. As mentioned in the context and effectiveness sections of the report, the CSW network is undergoing a reorganisation and jobs</p>	MoLSW (via the Institute for Social and Child Protection) in partnership with MoE, faculties of social	2014-2015

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	<p>systematisation process. The staff is also required to implement new quality standards. The social workers employed in the centres should therefore be provided access to up-to-date learning opportunities for professional development. Monitoring of learning outcomes and continuous improvement of knowledge and skills should be a priority. Regular skills profiling to check gaps between the existing expertise and demand deriving from reforms implementation and from beneficiaries should be carried out to inform the staff development policy of the respective CSWs. Additional capacity building programmes are needed for the full introduction of case management and improvement of gatekeeping and referral. In this respect, the packages of trainings developed by the Project (see effectiveness section) could be put of good use to ensure the development of a 'critical mass' of social workers throughout the country. It is recommended that the Institute of Social and Child Protection to be set up soon, in cooperation with UNICEF, carries out a thorough country-wide, dedicated Training Needs Analysis for the identification of concrete learning needs of social workers and of the most feasible delivery mechanisms of capacity building programme, based on experiential learning approaches. A Government partner in this process of overhauling the social work in the country could be a strong, representative national professional association of social workers (that UNICEF could help to establish) to represent, defend and promote the rights and interests of members, oversee the respect of professional ethics and conduct towards the end beneficiaries as well as to trigger the development of communities of practice for peer learning and cross-fertilisation of ideas and innovation in social work.</p>	<p>work, and with the assistance of UNICEF</p>	
S4	<p>Further invest in the development and diversification of country-wide family and community-based social services to contribute to the social inclusion of the most vulnerable children and prevent unnecessary family separation</p> <p>Children cannot move out of institutional care if alternative services are not available. A fully fledged child care system that effectively addresses family vulnerabilities is needed in order to prevent the placement of children in formal care and to enable the reintegration of children currently in institutions, as mentioned in the context, effectiveness, impact and sustainability sections of the report. The support provided by EU, UNICEF and other international partners for the development of family and community-based services for children in need should continue in order to assist the Montenegrin authorities at central and local level to cope with a number of challenges during the years to come, as follows: a) expansion of family-based and community-based services, especially for children under the age of three and children with disabilities, to all municipalities across the country, which address both prevention and</p>	<p>MoLSW in partnership with MoE and MoH, local self-governments and CSOs, with the support of EU, UNICEF Country Office and other international partners</p>	<p>Gradually, starting from 2014 over a period of 3-4 years</p>

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	<p>response in a continuum of services; b) diversification of the range of services according to the needs of vulnerable children and their families (e.g. specialised, emergency and respite foster care, home assistance, outreach services for vulnerable children in rural areas, mother-and-baby temporary shelters) in parallel with increasing their quality; c) further development of intersectoral approach among local social welfare, health, education and employment systems to prevent child abandonment and ensure sustainable support solutions for the vulnerable parents, based on the EC concept of 'active inclusion'; d) support the formation of a competitive market of service providers (including public bodies and NGOs) to ensure best quality of care at affordable prices for vulnerable children and their families. Slow progress in the deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities calls for energetic support of their biological families to facilitate family reunification through home assistance and access to day care services and support for kinship care. Assistance is planned to be provided by IPA Bridging to the foreseen Division for the Development of Social and Child Protection Services (MoLSW) to manage public funds for the diversification and expansion of services in a transparent and accountable manner.</p>		
S5	<p>Prioritise the development of an efficient quality assurance system in the social and child protection system on the basis of transparent accreditation and licensing procedures</p> <p>Quality assurance is dependant upon the fulfilment of the following prerequisites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all new quality standards in place and former legal provisions aligned with new law and secondary legislation; ▪ a functional system of licencing of professionals and service providers; ▪ a system of accreditation of training programmes; ▪ a system of continuous professional training, possibly based on professional credits; ▪ quality monitoring, supervision and social inspection functions in place; ▪ self-evaluation tools and methodologies to facilitate quality self-adjustments, also based on communities of practice; ▪ (advisable) an accredited inter-sectoral training facility for COCSEN providing regular trainings to commissions' members for ensuring a common approach towards children with special needs across the country and counteract the effects of frequent turnover of members. <p>As highlighted in the context, effectiveness and sustainability sections of the report, assistance is needed to develop the capacity of the foreseen Institute for Social and Child Protection and the Social</p>	MoLSW, Institute for Social and Child Protection, and Social Inspection, with the support of EU, UNICEF and UNDP	2014-2016

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	Inspection, which will be in charge of fulfilling most of the above prerequisites. Once set up, it is recommended to organise a Quality Assurance strategic planning workshop to be attended by the Institute, the Social Inspection, the MoLSW (in charge of licensing of service providers) and other relevant line ministries (e.g. MoE) to clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability in quality assurance as well as a concrete action plan for joint development of the quality assurance system in the country.		
S6	<p>Support the development of more evidence-based policies in the child protection system to inform efficient planning of resources and adjustment of policies to needs</p> <p>Interviews and focus groups with professionals, parents and NGOs have all reported that there are cases of children with disability who are not registered in any system (health, social welfare or education) and who are kept hidden by their parents due to stigma and lack of information on available statutory support. The Strategy for the Development of Social and Child Welfare 2013-2017 acknowledges this reality, too. There is no mapping of these 'invisible children' and the size of the problem is unknown to ground any policy measure and open access to available services. In Serbia, following a mapping exercise, around 200 'invisible' children from 41 municipalities were identified in 2012. A similar situation seems to exist in the case of children in informal kinship care i.e. whose kin caregivers are not registered with the CSW. During the field visit, the evaluation team met three such cases, which seems to indicate that the actual number is significant. Being invisible to the system, these kin caregivers and children could not be monitored by the CSW and are not entitled to statutory financial benefits, raising a serious equity issue for the system. It is therefore strongly recommended that a country-wide initiative, possibly in collaboration with schools and NGOs, is launched to identify the 'invisible' children with disabilities and children in informal kinship care (number and vulnerability profile) in order to plan and implement evidence-based policies of assistance of children and their families. In this respect, an excellent mapping methodology, which was tested in Serbia in an IPA project on community-based social services, could be easily used in Montenegro as well. The collected data should be then introduced into the child protection database and used for analysis and action taking.</p>	MoLSW, in collaboration with schools, NGOs, judiciary, penitentiaries and UNICEF	End 2014
S7	<p>Further invest in tolerance building towards children with disability</p> <p>Although significant shifts in thinking have occurred about the consequences of institutionalisation and about child rights norms and biases related to institutionalised children, the situation is different as far as children with disability are concerned. UNICEF has carried out a 4-year campaign "It's About Ability" with</p>	MoLSW and CSWs, in partnership with MoE, NGOs, media, parents	Permanent

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	important results. However, the findings of this evaluation (sections on effectiveness, impact, human rights and cross-cutting issues) indicate that further efforts are required until sustainable outcomes (changes of practices and ingrained prejudices) are achieved across the country. At the same time, deinstitutionalisation and family reunification requires an efficient and accessible network of services able to support families to raise the child (financial security, a family environment free of violence, abuse and neglect). Therefore, public information and tolerance building actions need to continue for some time until sustainable shifts in cultural norms and values are in place. Based on feedback received from children and parents, better use of social media is needed in order to reach the young population who is more open and could influence their peers and parents as well. More representation of parents of children with disabilities was also recommended as they could send in a much more convincing way the message of the campaign or any other public information and awareness raising initiative.		
Operational Recommendations (O)			
O1	<p>Accelerate the sustainable transformation of the Children's Home 'Mladost' into a performant multi-functional complex of services</p> <p>In line with the findings detailed in the effectiveness section of this report, the management team of 'Mladost' should be supported to streamline the draft Operational Plan of Transformation, by prioritising the services to be developed based on solid evidence of current and estimated need to ensure optimal rate of utilization and cost-effective use of resources. For priority services, feasibility studies and cost-benefit analyses might be needed (especially for those which require infrastructure adjustments) in order to investigate various options (including costing) and take an informed decision concerning the configuration of the respective service. Many of the services included in the Operational Plan are highly specialised and require important investment in training of the staff, which the institution and MoLSW have to plan in advance to ensure a smooth setting up and functioning of the new service. Current training needs of the staff should be also considered, the most demanded training themes referring to methods of work with children with behavioural problems and with developmental needs. In the opinion of the evaluation team, training is also needed: to improve the quality of the individual care plans, based on active participation of all relevant staff members and, very important, of children and their parents (to the extent possible); preparing children for taking responsibilities and for independent living. Given the commitment of the management of the institution to become a centre of excellence in service provision</p>	Mladost, MoLSW, CSW Herceg Novi, with the assistance of UNICEF and EU	2014-2017

No	Recommendations	Addressee	Timing
	for child deinstitutionalisation and prevention of abandonment, investment in professional development should be indeed a top priority. The professional development programme could combine classroom courses with on-the-job training, on-line learning fora, twinning with counterparts from abroad, work shadowing, work placements, study visits. The format of training needs to be certainly adapted to the service that is going to be put in function.		
O2	<p>Improve the design of future projects, notably in terms of risks mitigation strategy and gender mainstreaming</p> <p>UNICEF team is recommended to design a risk mitigation strategy during the planning of future projects and to regularly review and update in order to guide the remedial action needed (see efficiency analysis in the report). Gender mainstreaming needs to be embedded in the DoA, indicators, monitoring and reporting processes (see analysis of human rights and cross-cutting issues). The Theory of Change for this Project has been developed retrospectively for the purpose of the evaluation, as it has not mainstreamed in UNICEF programming when the Project was designed in 2010. For future projects, it is nevertheless recommended to construct the theory of change at the beginning of a project, as outcomes and processes are viewed differently with hindsight. Target groups and final beneficiaries need to be clearly defined and, to the extent possible, quantified as well.</p>	UNICEF Country Office	During programming phase of future projects

4.2.2 Lessons learnt

- 1) **Family and community-based services represent a significant breakthrough for child care, but most vulnerable and neglected children with disabilities could still be in danger.** Public prejudices against children with disability, stigma and lack of information about the available services and financial support could impede the access of these children to available family and community-based services. There also might be “hidden” children who are not registered in any formal system of care and support. Fostering is an effective family-based form of alternative care, which is far more beneficial for the normal development of the children and much cheaper than residential care. However, very rarely children with disability benefit of this form of care, as disability is usually one of the most important factors which decreases the interest for fostering, as shown by KAP 2014 conducted by the evaluated Project. Accurate mapping of the most vulnerable children with disability, efficient family information and counselling on statutory rights and social benefits, training and support for specialised foster carers, correct referral to appropriate education and child protection services, careful planning of support according to needs (including outreach facilities), empowerment of parents to claim their rights and fight against public intolerance are essential prerequisites which should accompany family and community-based services.
- 2) **Securing ownership and empowerment of national counterparts may decrease efficiency of support on short-term, but yield important investment returns on long-term.** Commitment to ensure the full involvement and participation of national stakeholders in the implementation work, and to advising policy making processes in an open and transparent manner could render the initial timelines envisaged for certain activities too ambitious, as it was the case of the Project under evaluation. As a result, project managers need to frequently align the implementation schedule to the agenda and capacities of the national stakeholders and to adjust deadlines for various deliverables accordingly. Extension of the implementation period might be required as well. In case projects include activities that are dependent on the adoption of legal acts, usually not under the control of the project managers, implementation delays could be even higher. These risks need to be identified during the design phase and a mitigation strategy has to be worked out to prevent or address them in case of occurrence. Over-reliance on the adoption of new legal acts as a prerequisite for the implementation of project activities should be avoided and negotiation of buy-in needs to be done at an earlier stage to begin practical implementation on the understanding that these run simultaneously with policy work. At the same time, building national ownership and empowerment should not be underestimated given their strong investment returns on long term.
- 3) **Flexibility in project implementation is needed to cope with emerging needs and benefit of arising opportunities.** Project managers need to be sufficiently versatile to address key emerging needs during the implementation of their projects and make the most of every opportunity created by the project. Project managers could frequently get additional requests for assistance from the national stakeholders, as it was the case in the evaluated Project (e.g. support for the design of strategies, health assessment study, fiscal analysis, etc.). Donors and project steering committee need to encourage the project managers and their partners to accommodate new activities within an existing project in order to cope with emerging needs and challenges, especially when these are closely linked to and could contribute to the purpose and goals of the respective project.