

INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT

**CONTINUATION OF THE CHILD CARE
SYSTEM REFORM IN MONTENEGRO
(IPA 2014)**

Part of the “Support to Montenegrin Social Reform”

06 August 2015

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List of acronyms used in the report

CSW	Centre for Social Work
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DCC	Day Care Centre for Children with Disabilities
ISCP	The Institute for Social and Child Protection
MoLSW	The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SGH	Small Group Home
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund

1. Description

- 1.1. Name of Coordinator of the grant contract: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) represented by UNICEF Montenegro
- 1.2. Name and title of the Contact Person: Benjamin Perks, UNICEF Representative to Montenegro, UNICEF Montenegro
- 1.3. Name of Beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies) in the Action: Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro (MoLSW)
- 1.4. Title of the Action: Continuation of the Child Care System Reform in Montenegro
- 1.5. Contract number: IPA/2014/340-247
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the Action: 6 August 2014 – 6 January 2016
- 1.7. Reporting period: 6 August 2014 - 6 August 2015
- 1.8. Target country(ies) or region(s): Montenegro
- 1.9. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups¹ (if different) (including numbers of women and men):

Target groups of this intervention are the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW), as the leader of the social and child care system reform in the country, and the concerned social and child protection institutions, in order to strengthen their capacity to manage a reformed child protection system and improve their work practices in line with international standards and best practice. The concerned social and child protection institutions include the Institute for Social and Child Protection (ISCP), the network of centres for social work (CSWs) and their field units, Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela, health and educational institutions, Day Care Centres for children with disabilities (DCCs) etc. All children and families in Montenegro are potential users of the social and child protection system, but the Action targets in particular vulnerable families and children (approximately 18,000 children²), children without parental care (approximately 450), children with disabilities (CWD – the total number in the country is unknown, but there are around 130 CWD in various forms of residential care, 145 children and young people in day care centres of whom almost 80 children).

- 1.10. Country(ies) in which the activities take place: Montenegro

¹ "Target group" are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and "final beneficiaries" are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

² An estimation based on the number of entries in the electronic Child Protection Database in May 2014. Data on social and child protection service users is still being entered into the Social Welfare Information System.

2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

2.1. Executive summary of the Action

Please give a global overview of the Action's implementation for the reporting period (no more than ½ page)

This Action is a continuation of the Child Care System Reform supported through IPA 2010 (see 3.5). The intention of the Action is to consolidate and build on the positive momentum of the previous phase of Child Care System Reform (2011-2014) – by supporting further operationalization of the new Law on Social and Child Protection (from 2013) and strengthening the capacities of the system to implement the reform - from the highest policy making levels to the front line professionals providing social work interventions and services, as well as to support continuous expansion of social and child protection services. The total budget is 300,000 EUR, of which 200,000 is provided by the EU and 100,000 by UNICEF.

After one year of implementation of the Action, progress has been made overall in meeting the specific objective and the expected results of the Action, for instance, more children are benefitting from family and community based services, the social and child protection system has been strengthened through the development of regulations, establishment of the Institute for Social and Child Protection (ISCP) and capacity building of MoLSW, ISCP and centres for social work (CSWs) or will be increased through the provision of additional technical assistance and capacity building based on conducted assessments and research.

However, challenges have been identified in relation to the number of children in the institution “Mladost” where figures instead of continuing to decrease have increased. Limited capacities of the system, and the exigencies of the overall reform of the sector (e.g. rolling out of the Social Welfare Information System) meant that some activities had to be postponed for autumn 2015. The last few months of project implementation will thus be intense. Focus will be on strengthening capacities of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection, the ISCP and CSWs, on enhancing cooperation with the health sector for the prevention of institutionalization and on supporting the expansion of foster care and other child protection services, and finally in taking measures to ensure MoLSWs strengthened commitment to deinstitutionalization in line with international standards, in order to achieve the set targets.

Specific Objective: Children and vulnerable families have enhanced access to quality, inclusive and sustainable child protection services

SO. "Indicator 1": Children beneficiaries of the Montenegrin social and child protection system benefit from improved social and child care system performance by the end of 2015.

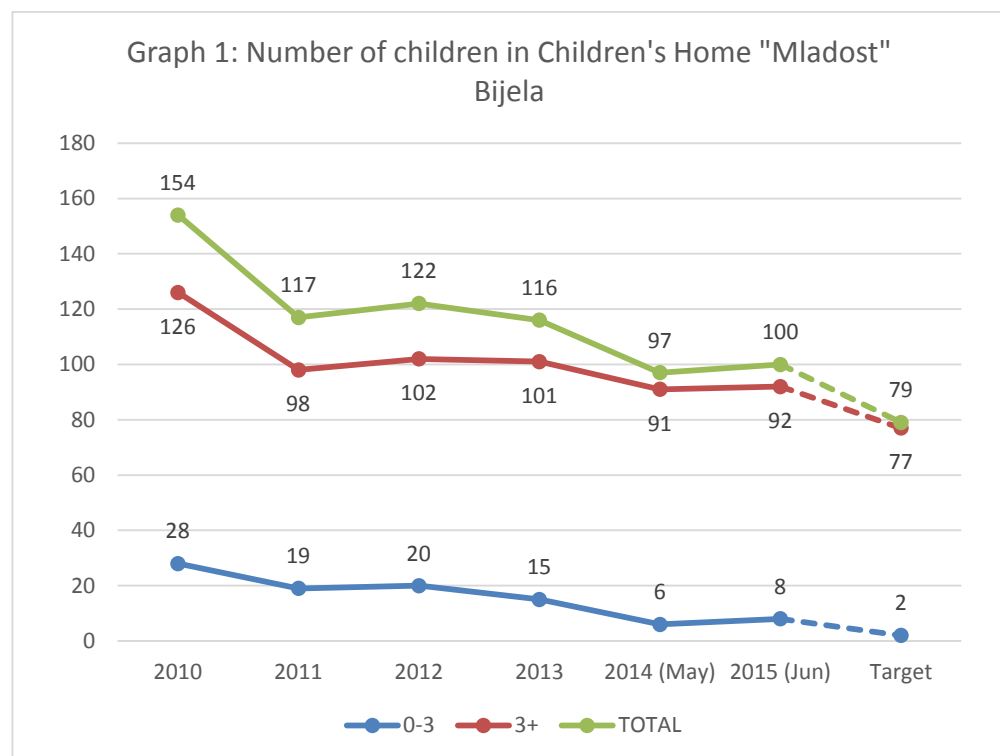
Level of achievement: As planned, this indicator will be measured close to the end of the intervention based on a survey on the satisfaction of child beneficiaries and their parents/primary caretakers. At this point, it can be noted that numerous activities have been implemented in the reporting period aiming to improve social and child care system performance in the near future: functional analysis of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection, CSW's capacity building on newly introduced case management, development of the regulatory framework enabling the expansion of services and introducing quality assurance mechanisms, ongoing transformation of “Mladost” institution, further development of social and child protection services, etc.,

SO. "Indicator 2": The number of children aged 0-3 in “Mladost” institution decreased by 66% by the end of 2015 (baseline 6 at the beginning of May 2014, target 2)

Level of achievement: Although when compared to the period before the reform process intensified (2010) there has been a 71% decrease in the number of children aged under 3 in “Mladost” Institution, in the reporting period (August 2014-August 2015) unfortunately there has been an increase compared to the May 2014 baseline (please see graph 1 below). Namely, there were 8 children aged 0-3 on 1 June 2015 (2 boys and 6 girls; 2 children with disabilities). Efforts will be intensified to reverse this negative development and achieve the set target.

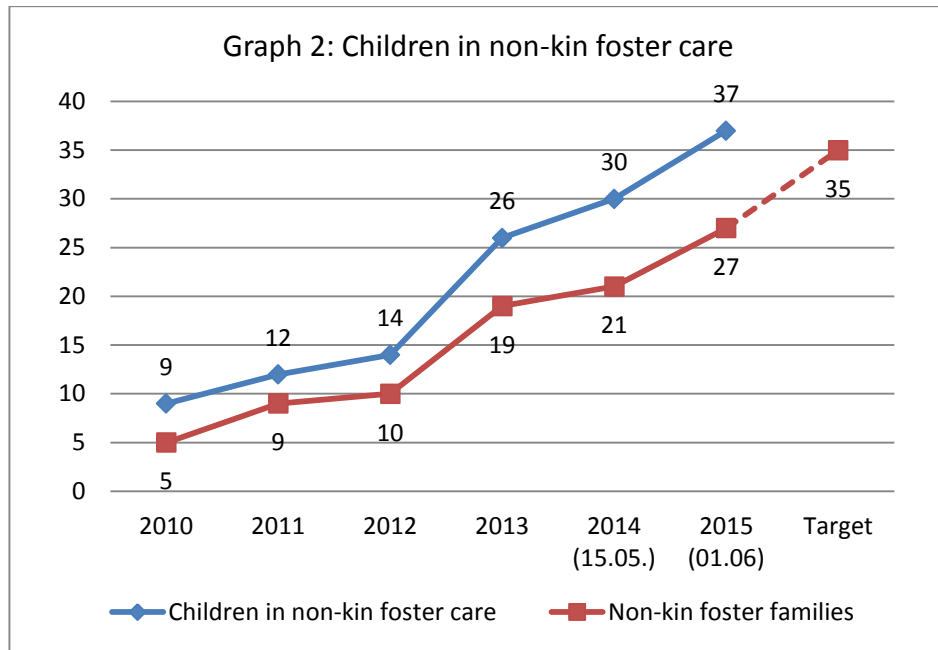
SO. "Indicator 3": The number of children aged 3+ in “Mladost” institution decreased by 15% by the end of 2015 (baseline 91 at the beginning of May 2014, target 77).

Level of achievement: Although when compared to the period before the reform process intensified (2010) there has been a 27% decrease in the number of children aged 3+ in “Mladost” Institution, in the reporting period (August 2014-August 2015) unfortunately there has been a slight increase compared to the May 2014 baseline (please see graph 1 below). Namely, there were 92 children aged 3+ on 1 June 2015 (51 boys and 41 girls; 40 children with disabilities). Efforts will be intensified to reverse this negative development and achieve the set target.



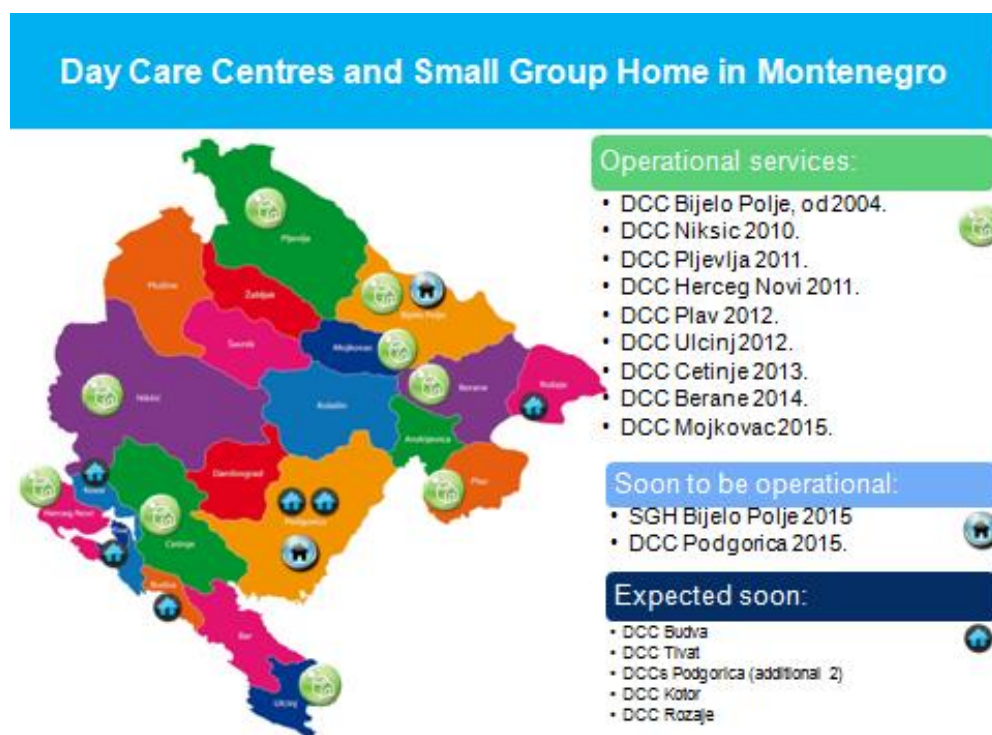
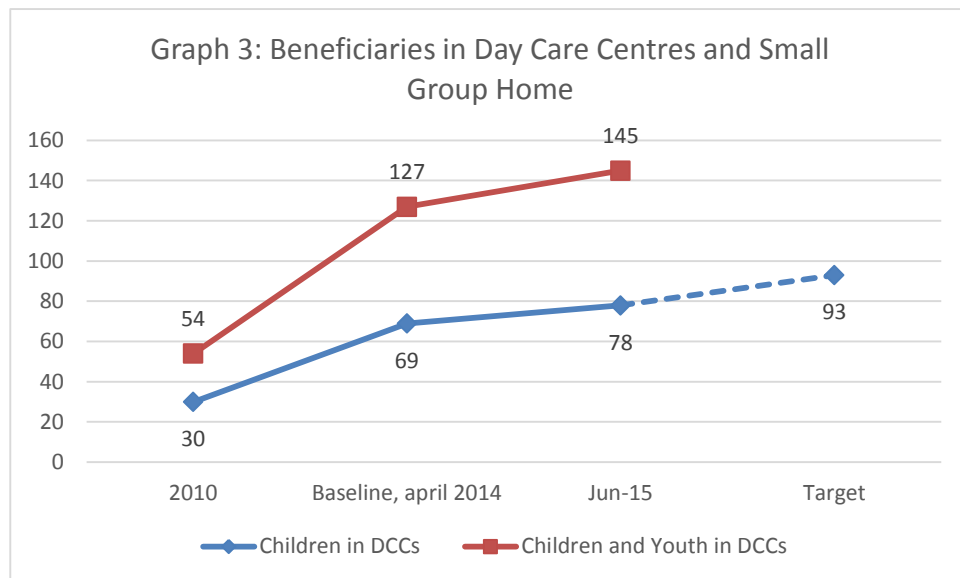
SO. "Indicator 4": The number of non-kin foster families increased by 66% by the end of 2015 (baseline 21 families at the beginning of May 2014, target 35).

Level of achievement: The number of non-kin foster families has continued to grow since the reform intensified (2010). There were 27 families on 1 June 2015. This is a 28% increase compared to the May 2014 baseline (please see graph 2 below). These families accommodated 37 children (18 boys and 19 girls, 8 children under the age of 3, and 3 children with disabilities). Efforts will be intensified to achieve the set target.



SO. "Indicator 5": The number of children benefiting from day care centres and small group home increased by 35% (baseline 69 children in day care centres and 0 in small group home at the end of April 2014, target 93 children).

Level of achievement: There were 78³ children in DCCs on 1 June 2015 (44 boys and 34 girls⁴). This is a 13% increase compared to the April 2014 baseline (please see graph 3 and map below). There are no children in the SGH at present, however it will open in September and it is expected to be filled to capacity, and the DCC in Podgorica is expected to open in autumn, hence this target will be achieved.



³ The total number of beneficiaries (children and young people) was 145 on 1 June 2015, compared to 127 at the end of April 2014.

⁴ In April 2014, 29 girls and 40 boys with disabilities benefitted of the services provided by the DCCs supported by the Project. As noted by the final evaluation, "this gender imbalance might reflect the higher number of boys in the overall number of children with disability across the country". From Promeso Consulting Ltd. 2014. "Final Evaluation of the 'Child Care System Reform' IPA 2010". Unpublished report. P. 67.

2.2. Results and Activities

What is your assessment of the results of the Action so far? Include observations on the performance and the achievement of outputs, outcomes and impact in relation to specific and overall objectives, and whether the Action has had any unforeseen positive or negative results.

This report covers the period between 6 August 2014 and 6 August 2015, i.e. twelve months of implementation. The Action ends in five months, i.e. on 6 January 2016.

As regards the achievement of the Specific Objective during this reporting period, progress has been made in enhancing access of children and vulnerable families to quality, inclusive and sustainable child protection services. When the specific objective is broken down into specific segments of the reform and impact on various groups of beneficiaries, progress is varied.

Namely, while the number of children in the Children's Home "Mladost" has significantly decreased since the reform intensified (since 2010), this number has somewhat increased compared to the May 2014 baseline, both in relation to children aged 0-3 and children aged above 3. While fluctuations in the number of children are to be expected in this overall positive trend, the recent negative development shows the pressing need for the development of preventative services and alternatives to institutionalization without delay. This issue was raised with MoLSW as well as at the last project Steering Committee meeting (held on 10 June 2015), and follow up actions have been agreed to reverse the negative development. On the other hand, the number of non-kin foster families has continued to increase as well as the number of children benefitting from community-based services such as DCCs. The SGH is expected to become operational in September 2015. Finally, a beneficiary satisfaction survey will be conducted by the end of 2015 to assess the overall impact of the system reform on the lives of the beneficiaries, although the ongoing activities and the results achieved thus far or to be achieved in the forthcoming period have had a positive impact on the system's performance.

As regards the three Expected Results of the Action, the recent execution of a Functional Analysis of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection represents a very valuable step in strengthening the MoLSW in leading, planning, implementing and monitoring the reform process (Result 1), as it identified the weaknesses and capacity gaps in the Directorate and recommended a comprehensive capacity building strategy. Until the end of implementation of this Action, this Action will provide a modest contribution to the implementation of the aforementioned capacity building strategy, however, the Functional Analysis represents an important tool, or a roadmap, for the MoLSW to invest in strengthening the Directorate for Social and Child Protection in the coming years.

When it comes to strengthening the legislative and institutional framework and coordination for the provision of quality social and child protection services (Result 2), the following achievements are particularly noteworthy: the three bylaws of the Law on Social and Child Protection which were meant to be supported through this Action have been adopted, and the vast majority of CSW professionals have been trained in case management. Further strengthening of CSWs in the provision of foster care, capacity assessment and strengthening of the ISCP and strengthening of the health sector and its cooperation with the social welfare sector in the prevention of institutionalization are in preparatory phase and will be implemented in the final months of implementation of the Action.

Availability of and access to child protection services (Result 3) is continuously increasing, however, the pace of the development of child protection services has been slower than anticipated. It is expected that the situation will improve in the final months of the implementation of the Action, following the recent adoption of the Plan of Transformation of the Children's Home "Mladost" as well as the forthcoming opening of additional day

care centres in autumn 2015 and the opening of the first small group home in September 2015.

Efforts will be intensified to achieve all of the set targets and results by the end of the intervention, however, the fact that several activities designed to ensure achievement of the results have been postponed for autumn 2015 means that the last five months of implementation of the Action will be rather intense. The reasons for the delay in the implementation of these activities will be presented below, in summary, they include: limited capacities of MoLSW and the child protection system as a whole, exigencies of the overall reform of the sector (e.g. rolling out of the Social Welfare Information System which placed significant burden and workload on CSWs, parallel processes of development of regulations, documents on internal organization etc.), financial situation of the municipalities and their ability to finance services, incomplete level of understanding of and commitment to the agreed dynamic in the process of deinstitutionalization at the highest decision-making levels.

R1 – "Leadership, planning, implementation and monitoring of the reform process strengthened"

An important step toward strengthening MoLSW's Directorate for Social and Child Protection (henceforth: the Directorate) has been made through the execution of a functional review of the Directorate, including a comprehensive capacity building strategy for strengthening key functions of the Directorate: leadership, planning, implementation and monitoring of the reform process.

1.1 "Indicator 1": At least 80% professionals in the Directorate for Social and Child Protection with strengthened capacity in evidence-based leading, planning, implementing and monitoring the reform process by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: The capacity building of professionals in MoLSW's Directorate for Social and Child Protection in the area of evidence-based leading, planning, implementing and monitoring the reform will be conducted in autumn 2015, based on the Functional analysis of the Directorate conducted in May 2015. However, it should be noted that the capacities of the Directorate have been strengthened in managing and overseeing the implementation of case management methodology introduced in all CSWs in Montenegro.

A1.1 "Strengthening professional capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in leading, programme and financial planning, implementing and monitoring the reform process" includes two sub-activities:

A1.1.1 - Technical assistance for a functional analysis of MoLSW Directorate for Social and Child Protection with recommendations on necessary training programmes (training needs assessment)

The functional analysis of the Directorate was conducted in May 2015 by an international expert engaged by UNICEF. The methodology included desk review of social welfare and child protection legislation and policy and relevant reports and evaluations, a survey for the personnel of the Directorate, individual interviews with the personnel of the Directorate as well as other key professionals in the MoLSW, and meetings with relevant partners (national institutions and international organizations). The report was finalized in early July based on comments by MoLSW and UNICEF. The final report of the Functional Analysis is enclosed as an annex to the Interim Report.

This activity was meant to take place by the end of 2014, however it was postponed at the request of the director of the Directorate until the new Internal Organization

and Systematization of Work Posts of the MoLSW was finalized. This means that the envisaged training programme (A.1.1.2.) will be delivered in autumn 2015. The envisaged training is only a part of the capacity building strategy proposed by the Functional Analysis, aimed at strengthening the Directorate to lead, plan, coordinate, implement and monitor the reform process. However, the report represents an important tool for the Directorate to enhance its structure, professional capacities and performance in the coming years including, possibly, through IPA 2.

A1.1.2 - Technical assistance and delivery of training for MoLSW representatives, Institute for Social and Child Protection and directors of CSWs on evidence based policy-making using the child protection database data

Please see activity A1.1.1. above.

R2 – “Legislative and institutional framework strengthened and coordination enhanced for the provision of quality social and child protection services and to prevent institutionalization”

The development of three bylaws in the reporting period contributed the operationalization of the Law on Social and Child Protection (2013). Capacity building of the CSWs has continued in parallel to the strengthening of their structures/staff profiles. The ISCP has become operational although two key management positions remain vacant. Initial steps have been taken with the aim of enhancing coordination for the prevention of institutionalization and advancing foster care.

2.1 "Indicator 1": Three bylaws developed by July 2015.

Level of achievement: Achieved. The three bylaws envisaged by the Action have been prepared with the support of international consultants engaged by UNICEF and published in the *Official Gazette*.

2.2 "Indicator 2": At least 80% professionals in the Institute for Social and Child Protection with strengthened capacity to perform functions prescribed by Law (in line with training needs assessment) by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: The capacity building of ISCP professionals will take place in autumn 2015. However, personnel of the ISCP have taken part in various activities and training programmes which have contributed to their capacity building. The capacity building programme envisaged by the Action will be implemented in autumn to allow for the vacant middle management positions to be filled (the heads of two departments).

2.3 "Indicator 3": At least 100 relevant professionals in centres for social work with strengthened capacity in case management by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: Fully achieved. In the reporting period, 100 professionals in CSWs had their capacities strengthened in case management (80 females and 20 males), which, when added to the 19 professionals (18 females and 1 male) trained in spring 2014 within IPA 2010, makes for a total of 119 professionals. A final group of up to 20 professionals will be trained in early autumn 2015 following the adoption of the Systematization of Work Posts of all CSWs across Montenegro.

2.4 "Indicator 4": At least 100 health professionals with strengthened capacity in communication with vulnerable pregnant women/parents by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: The envisaged capacity building will take place in autumn 2015.

2.5 "Indicator 5": At least 20 professionals in centres for social work with strengthened capacity in the provision of specialised, emergency and respite fostering as per the Law on Social and Child Protection by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: The envisaged capacity building will take place in autumn 2015.

A2.1 - “Support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in finalizing secondary legislation to the Law on Social and Child Protection” can further be operationalized as:

A2.1.1 - Technical assistance to the preparation of rulebooks/bylaws in relation to licensing of professionals and accreditation of training programmes as well as minimum standards of socio-educational and counselling and therapeutic services.

The three bylaws envisaged by the Action (the bylaw on minimum standards of counselling and therapeutic and socio-educational services, the bylaw on licensing of professionals and the bylaw on accreditation of programmes) have been prepared by MoLSW’s working groups with technical assistance provided by two international consultants engaged by UNICEF. The bylaws have been published in the *Official Gazette*, namely, the bylaw on minimum standards of counselling and therapeutic and socio-educational services in issue 32/2015, and the bylaw on licensing of professionals and the bylaw on accreditation of programmes in issue 34/2015 (enclosed as an annex to this report).

It is also worth noting that two bylaws which were supported by UNICEF consultants within IPA 2010 but had not been finalized by the end of the intervention, were published during the reporting period of this Action: the bylaw on residential care standards for children and youth and the bylaw on community based services (*Official Gazette* 43/2014 and 30/2015, respectively).

UNICEF’s legal consultants have expressed concern, however, that the drafts they produced with the working group were subsequently significantly shortened by MoLSW’s legal department (as was the case with the bylaws adopted previously, in the framework of IPA 2010). The consultants prepared comments to the adopted bylaws which were shared with MoLSW. Also, although licensing of foster carers is envisaged by the Law on Social and Child Protection, this procedure is not regulated in any of the bylaws, based on a sudden decision by the MoLSW. This proves that a lot of work still remains to be done in order to build MoLSW’s understanding of and capacities in some of the key segments of the reform process (i.e. international standards and best practice in relation to legislation pertaining to social and child protection services).

A2.2 – “Strengthening professional capacity of the Institute for Social and Child Protection” can further be operationalized as:

A2.2.1 - Technical assistance in the development of a training programme (training needs assessment) and delivery of selected training of Institute for Social and Child Protection personnel.

The ISCP has become operational in the reporting period and the majority of envisaged staff members have been engaged, with the exception of middle management (the heads of two out of in total three departments) due to the lack of qualified applicants. The recruitment process for these positions will be repeated and the envisaged capacity building programme implemented subsequently, in autumn 2015. That said, relevant personnel of the ISCP have taken part in various activities and training programmes which have contributed to their capacity building (including on case management, see A2.3.1.). One of the professionals of the ISCP took part in the study visit to Belgrade, as part of the process of finalization of the Plan of Transformation of the Children’s Home “Mladost” (see A2.5.3.).

A2.3 – “Strengthening professional capacities of centres for social work” can further be operationalized as:

A2.3.1 - Technical assistance for scaling up the case management training in order to cover all centres for social work in Montenegro.

In the reporting period, five groups of CSW professionals, or in total 100 professionals, were trained in case management by an international consultancy agency. The training lasted six days for each group (of which one day was funded through the Social Card project). In addition, two-day training designed for the managerial level was held for 40 participants (divided into two groups) comprising representatives of the MoSLW, ISCP and the directors of CSWs and heads of field units (sample agendas enclosed as an annex). One more training session remains to be organized, for the sixth group of CSW professionals, in early autumn 2015. The final training session was postponed due to the delays in the adoption of the new systematization of CSWs- based on the relevant new regulations, which may result in the hiring of some additional professionals to be trained.

A2.4 – “Support to the social and child protection, health and education sectors in the prevention of child abandonment/relinquishment” can further be operationalized as:

A2.4.1 Technical assistance to the implementation of the Protocol on intersectoral cooperation for the prevention of institutionalization, with particular focus on health sector responsibilities and linkages with the social protection sector.

At a meeting held with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in early 2015 it was decided that UNICEF would hire a local consultant to support the integration of the Social Risk Matrix (which is an annex of the Protocol on intersectoral cooperation for the prevention of child abandonment/relinquishment) into the MoH’s information system managed by the Institute for Public Health. The Social Risk Matrix facilitates identification by primary health system professionals of pregnant women or mothers who are at risk of abandoning/relinquishing their baby. Considering that the consultancy position was advertised twice without success, the headhunting process is presently ongoing.

It was also agreed that relevant health professionals would be trained in autumn 2015 on sensitive communication with parents of children with disabilities.

A2.5 – “Strengthening the provision of foster care” (R2) includes three sub-activities:

A2.5.1 - Technical assistance and delivery of training of centre for social work professionals on various types of foster care as per the Law on Social and Child Protection 2013

This training was postponed until autumn 2015 at the request of the director of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection, due to CSWs intense involvement in the rolling out of the Social Welfare Information System.

A2.5.2 - Technical assistance and delivery of training of centre for social work professionals and “Mladost”, Bijela professionals on the preparation of children for going into foster care.

This training was also postponed until autumn 2015 at the request of the director of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection, due to CSWs intense involvement in the rolling out of the Social Welfare Information System.

A2.5.3 - Technical assistance to support centres for social work in further recruitment of foster carers and in supporting foster carers.

During the reporting period, UNICEF agreed with MoLSW to engage a national consultant to conduct an analysis of legal provisions relevant for foster carers in the areas of labour and social insurance, with the aim of enhancing foster carers entitlements and making foster care more attractive. The report has been prepared by the consultant and shared with MoLSW.

Ad hoc events to promote foster care involved the CSW Kotor and CSW Herceg Novi in the period between August 2014 and March 2015. CSW Kotor promoted foster care at a popular local festival, whereas the CSW in Herceg Novi was offered by the local Water Polo club Jadran to promote the Campaign “Every Child Needs a Family” (conducted within IPA 2010) during an international tournament held between 25 and 28 September 2014. The promotion of foster care included the provision of information by CSW professionals to interested spectators about foster care, use and dissemination of promotional material and free broadcast by the local TV station of the TV commercial “Every Child Needs a Family”.

In addition, a public discussion entitled “Child Rights - Fostering” was held in Herceg Novi in March 2015 under the auspices of the municipal assembly of that coastal town.

In autumn 2015, UNICEF will provide technical assistance to MoLSW in developing an annual plan for the promotion of foster care in order to ensure that such promotional events become a regular activity of all CSWs.

R3 – “Increased availability of and access to quality child protection services”

A significant novelty in the social and child protection system is recognizing the right to services (Law on Social and Child Protection 2013, Art. 11), and the establishment, during the reporting period, of the new department for development of services in the Directorate for Social and Child Protection. The Plan of Transformation of the Children’s Home “Mladost” was adopted in July 2015. The development of community based services such as day care centres (DCCs) and the small group home (SGH) has continued although at a slower pace than expected.

3.1 “Indicator 1”: At least one service (socio-educational, counselling, therapeutic, or crisis intervention as an alternative to institutional care) established in “Mladost”, Bijela institution by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: The Operational Plan of Transformation of Institution was adopted in July 2015, proposing the establishment of five services. Support to the establishment of one of the services will be provided in autumn 2015.

3.2 “Indicator 2”: One small group home and at least 2 new day care centres opened and operational by the end of 2015.

Level of achievement: 1 DCC became operational in the reporting period, namely the DCC Mojkovac. The SGH in Bijelo Polje is expected to be operational in September 2015. The DCC in Podgorica, which was reconstructed within IPA 2010, will become operational in autumn 2015.

A3.1 – “Support to the transformation of the children’s home “Mladost” in Bijela” includes three sub-activities:

A3.1.1 – Technical assistance to MoLSW, CSWs and “Mladost” in supporting children leaving care

During the reporting period, an important piece of research was conducted in partnership with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Juventas on youth leaving institutional care, with focus on the Children’s Home “Mladost”. A draft analysis has been produced, and it is expected to be finalized by the end of August 2015. The research will reveal some of the key gaps in the legal/policy framework as well as in the relevant professionals’ practice with regard to supporting young care leavers, and it will provide a deep insight into the personal experiences of young

people who left institutional care or who are preparing to do so in the coming years. The analysis will include recommendations for tackling the identified issues.

The training on supporting youth leaving care will be provided in autumn 2015, in the framework of the forthcoming revision of individual care plans of children residing in “Mladost” (see A3.1.2).

A3.1.2 – Technical assistance to the revision of individual care plans of children in “Mladost” in line with case management methodology and international best practice

This activity will be implemented in autumn 2015, during the regular revision of individual care plans. This activity could not be implemented sooner as CSWs had to first be trained in case management (A2.3.1)

A3.1.3 - Technical assistance to the implementation of the Plan of Transformation and to the implementation/piloting of at least one service envisaged by the Plan of Transformation

MoLSW finalized and adopted the Plan of Transformation of the institution in July 2015 following a study visit to Belgrade requested by MoLSW in order to learn about the process of transformation of the Centre for Infants, Children and Youth in Belgrade, in case some of the services established there could be replicated in Montenegro. The study visit took place between 24 and 26 June 2015 for a delegation of 7 representatives from the social and child protection system (MoLSW, “Mladost”, ISCP, agenda enclosed as an annex).

The Plan envisages the establishment of the following five services in “Mladost”: 1) transitional housing unit for older children preparing to leave institutional care in a house next to the “Mladost” building which is also owned by the institution, 2) emergency reception unit for up to 10 children victims of family violence for short term placement of maximum 6 months, 3) day care centre for children with disabilities for children of the municipality of Herceg Novi, 4) national child hotline, 5) emergency reception unit for children aged up to three years for short term crisis placement, assessment and intervention, with the aim of preventing institutionalization and with a capacity of 8 children (the Plan is enclosed as an annex).

Aside from the fact that the adoption of the Plan was long overdue, UNICEF was excluded from the process of finalization of the Plan, and finds some of its content problematic. The aspect of the Plan that raises particular concern is the service of emergency reception unit for children aged up to three years of age for short term placement without indication of the maximum length of time a child may be placed. UNICEF strongly believes that this is contrary to the reform efforts to prevent and eradicate institutional placement of children aged under 3. The Government should instead invest efforts in preventing separation of children from their families and in further expanding foster care services, especially for young children, and improving permanency planning so that these children are not in alternative care for too long.

In addition, UNICEF is concerned to see that the service of Family Outreach Worker whose role is to serve as liaison between CSWs and families at risk of abandoning/relinquishing children in order to prevent institutionalization and the piloting of which UNICEF supported in late 2014 and first half of 2015, has not been included in the Plan.

UNICEF has already contacted the EU Delegation in order to organize a joint meeting with the MoLSW in order to find ways to remedy this situation and address other challenges identified in the course of implementation of the reform.

A3.2 – “Support to the establishment of child protection services” (in cooperation with UNDP) includes two sub-activities:

A3.2.1 - Technical assistance to support the functioning of the first small group home in Bijelo Polje

Despite the fact that the SGH in Bijelo Polje was constructed and equipped by the end of IPA 2010, the process of its establishment (adoption of various decisions and documents by the Municipal Assembly, reaching of agreement between MoLSW and the local authorities on the financing model) took one year. During the reporting period, the MoLSW and the Municipality of Bijelo Polje signed a Memorandum of Understanding on shared financing of the small group home service. It was decided that the local service Public Institution Day Care Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities “Tisa”, in operation since 2004, would become the Public Institution Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities “Tisa” which would provide day care services in the premises of the DCC and residential care in the premises of the SGH. The SGH is expected to become operational in September 2015.

According to the bylaw on residential care for children including SGHs (*Official Gazette* 43/2014), placement in an institution and a small group home is provided to children without parental care, children whose development has been hindered due to family circumstances, children with disabilities, and children with behaviour problems (Art. 4). The SGH in Bijelo Polje will accommodate children with disabilities. The children will be from Bijelo Polje and neighbouring municipalities, some will be placed in the small group home from their biological families who are unable to care for them and some from the large-scale children’s homes (in Montenegro or neighbouring countries), based on the ongoing assessment by Centres for Social Work from Bijelo Polje and neighbouring municipalities and the MoLSW.

The Public Institution Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities “Tisa” has 26 work posts. The recruitment of personnel who will work in the small group home (14 persons, some to be shared with the DCC) is in its final stage.

In order to support the smooth functioning of the small group home, and to ensure that the service is being provided to children and youth in line with child rights and international standards on alternative care and national regulations, an international expert will be engaged to train the personnel in late August and to provide supervisory support in the first months of functioning of the service. The process of recruitment of the expert is ongoing. UNICEF has been providing technical assistance in the implementation of this activity (and is on the selection panel for the selection of the training expert), whilst the cost of training and supervisory visits will be covered with funding that the MoLSW transferred to UNDP for the development of social and child protection services⁵.

With the aim of raising awareness of the municipal authorities about the ongoing reform and increasing their understanding of the important role they play in providing the necessary services to their children and young people, UNICEF Montenegro representative delivered a presentation at the meeting of the Governing Board of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro on 23 April 2015 about the need for additional SGHs as well as support services for youth leaving care.

A3.2.2 - Technical assistance to support the opening of at least two new day care centres for children with disabilities in Montenegro

⁵ MoLSW transferred 350,000 EUR to UNDP for the continuation of the reform until December 2015 (subsequently extended until mid-2016) (see MoLSW press release <http://www.minradiss.gov.me/vijesti/138957/SAOPsTENJE-Nastavak-reforme-sistema-socijalne-i-djecije-zastite.html>, accessed 4 July 2014).

The DCC in Mojkovac became operational in March 2015. The DCC in Podgorica, which was constructed and equipped during IPA 2010 is expected to become functional in autumn 2015, following staff recruitment. Thus far, the local parliament adopted the decision on establishing the DCC as a public institution and the acting director has been appointed.

2.3. If relevant, submit a revised logframe, highlighting the changes.

No changes are to be made at this point.

2.4. Please list all contracts (works, supplies, services) above €60,000 awarded for the implementation of the action during the reporting period, giving for each contract the amount, the award procedure followed and the name of the contractor.

Not applicable. The highest contract was in the amount of €30,870.

2.5. Please provide an updated action plan⁶

Activity / Month		1	2	3	4	5	Implementing body
A1.1.1 - Technical assistance for a functional analysis of MoLSW Directorate for Social and Child Protection with recommendations on necessary training programmes (training needs assessment)	Preparation	Completed					UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A1.1.2 - Technical assistance and delivery of training for MoLSW representatives, Institute for Social and Child Protection and directors of CSWs on evidence based policy-making using the child protection database data	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.1.1 - Technical assistance to the preparation of rulebooks/bylaws in relation to licensing of professionals and accreditation of training programmes as well as minimum standards of socio-educational and counselling and therapeutic services.	Preparation	Completed					UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.2.1 - Technical assistance in the development of a training programme (training needs assessment) and delivery of selected training of Institute for Social and Child Protection personnel	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.3.1 - Technical assistance for scaling up the case management training in order to cover all centres for social work in Montenegro	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.4.1 - Technical assistance to the implementation of the Protocol on intersectoral cooperation for the prevention of institutionalization, with particular focus on health sector responsibilities and linkages with the social protection sector	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.5.1 - Technical assistance and delivery of training of centre for social work professionals on various types of foster care as per the Law on Social and Child Protection 2013	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF

⁶ This plan will cover the financial period between the interim report and the next report.

A2.5.2 - Technical assistance and delivery of training of centre for social work professionals and “Mladost”, Bijela professionals on the preparation of children for going into foster care.	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A2.5.3 - Technical assistance to support centres for social work in further recruitment of foster carers and in supporting foster carers.	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A3.1.1 – Technical assistance to MoLSW, CSWs and “Mladost” in supporting children leaving care	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A3.1.2 - Technical assistance to the revision of individual care plans of children in “Mladost” in line with case management methodology and international best practice	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A3.1.3 - Technical assistance to the implementation of the Plan of Transformation and to the implementation/piloting of at least one service envisaged by the Plan of Transformation	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A3.2.1 - Technical assistance to support the functioning of the first small group home in Bijelo Polje	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF
A3.2.2 - Technical assistance to support the opening of at least two new day care centres for children with disabilities in Montenegro	Preparation						UNICEF
	Execution						UNICEF

3. Beneficiaries/affiliated entities and other Cooperation

- 3.1.** How do you assess the relationship between the Beneficiaries/affiliated entities of this grant contract (i.e. those having signed the mandate for the Coordinator or an affiliated entity statement)? Please provide specific information for each Beneficiary/affiliated entity.

N/A (no Beneficiaries/affiliated entities who signed the mandate for the Coordinator or an affiliated entity statement).

- 3.2.** How would you assess the relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries? How has this relationship affected the Action?

The main beneficiary of the Action is the MoLSW. UNICEF has a long term partnership with MoLSW in the implementation of a broad social and child protection system reform (concerning the rights and status of the most disadvantaged children: children deprived of parental care, children with disabilities, children victims of violence, abuse and neglect, children in contact with the law and other children in need) in the framework of the Country Programme Document signed between UNICEF and the Government of Montenegro, the latest one covering the period 2012-2016.

Notwithstanding the successful cooperation with MoLSW in introducing international standards and best practice in the Montenegrin social and child protection system, the limited capacities of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection (confirmed by the Functional Analysis, A1.1.1) meant that some activities had to be postponed or were not implemented in a fully satisfactory manner (e.g. bylaws for the Law on Social and Child Protection, A2.1.1, the Operational Plan of Transformation of “Mladost”, A3.1.3). Furthermore, while there is increasing acceptance of the necessity of deinstitutionalization, its urgency from the perspective of a child growing up in an institution has not been fully taken on board by key decision-makers. This level of understanding of the reform process was reflected in the quality of the bylaws and the Plan of Transformation of “Mladost”, in the delays in the expansion or establishment of the necessary services (e.g. finalization of the Plan of Transformation of “Mladost”, development and expansion of foster care, opening of DCCs and the SGH), and a lack of transparency and collaboration in the finalization of the Plan of Transformation of “Mladost”. The reporting period also coincided with the rolling out of the Social Welfare Information System (“Social Card”), as a result of which several activities that involve centres for social work were postponed (e.g. case management training A2.3.1, and consequently training on foster care A2.5.1 and 2.5.2).

During the reporting period a new Minister of MoLSW was appointed, however, this did not significantly affect the implementation of the Action. Several meetings were held with the new Minister where full commitment of MoLSW to the Action was reaffirmed. However, UNICEF has contacted the EU Delegation in order to organize a joint meeting with the Minister in September 2015 in order to address some of the challenges identified in the course of implementation of the Action and the reform as a whole.

- 3.3.** Where applicable, describe your relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action:

As described in 3.2. above, the main beneficiary of the Action is the MoLSW. Other actors involved include child protection institutions under the MoLSW (CSWs, Children’s Home “Mladost”), ISCP, DCCs, the Ministry of Health, municipal governments, NGOs. With all of the aforementioned organizations and institutions UNICEF has had successful cooperation.

The implementation of the Action is supported by a Project Steering Committee, composed of representatives of: MoLSW, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations, the Union

of Municipalities, the EU Delegation, UNICEF and UNDP, and which convened twice during the reporting period.

3.4. Where applicable, outline any links and synergies you have developed with other actions.

Strong synergies are built with MoLSW and UNDP's component "Continuation of Social Welfare Reform", as part of the overall "Support to Montenegrin Social Reform" IPA 2014. Cooperation with UNDP in this area relates in particular to capacity building of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection including its new department for the development of services, finalization of secondary legislation accompanying the Law on Social and Child Protection (2013), the development of social and child protection services, and strengthening of monitoring mechanisms through electronic databases (with the aim to incorporate the Child Protection Database into the Social Welfare Information System).

3.5. If your organisation has received previous EU grants in view of strengthening the same target group, in how far has this Action been able to build upon/complement the previous one(s)? (List all previous relevant EU grants).

As its title suggests, this Action is the continuation of the Child Care System Reform initiative implemented by the MoLSW and UNICEF between January 2011 and July 2014 in the framework of IPA 2010. The Child Care System Reform was the third component of the overall "*Social Welfare and Child Care System Reform: Enhancing Social Inclusion*" Project (where the first component was coordinated by the Ministry of Education in the area of inclusive education, and the second component was implemented by MoLSW and UNDP in the area of social welfare reform). This Action, and the "Continuation of Social Welfare Reform" (implemented by MoLSW and UNDP) within IPA 2014 was conceived as the "bridging intervention" covering the time period between IPA 2010 and IPA 2.

This Action was carefully designed to build on the progress of the ongoing reform of the social and child protection system and to address the gaps identified in the course of its implementation. The Final Evaluation of the "Child Care System Reform" (IPA 2010) reform initiative, conducted in the middle of 2014, clearly showed that:

"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 [Committee on the Rights of the Child] 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. Still, 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".⁷

The Evaluation concluded that "external support is crucial for the continuation of reforms until rights-based foundations of practices and procedures are built and capacities are in place to ensure that laws and systems run effectively."⁸

⁷ Promeso Consulting Ltd. 2014. Ibid. Pp. 8-9.

⁸ Promeso Consulting Ltd. 2014. Ibid. Pp. 74.

The Evaluation has drawn important lessons learned and provided recommendations for future work, the majority of which are found in the ongoing Action: a) To 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, b) To strengthen the managerial capacity of Centres for Social Work in order to support successful implementation of reforms at local level, c) To 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, d) To 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, e) To 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, f) To 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, g) Further invest in tolerance building towards children with disability, h) Accelerate the sustainable transformation of the Children's Home 'Mladost' into a performant multi-functional complex of services. An outline of this Action was shared with the agency performing the Final Evaluation and was assessed as "legitimate and fully justified by the needs of the system and of its beneficiaries at national and local levels"⁹.

It may also be noted that UNICEF Montenegro also received two IPA grants from the EU in the area of reform of the juvenile justice system (IPA 2007 and 2011), where UNICEF's main implementing partner was the Ministry of Justice of Montenegro.

⁹ Promeso Consulting Ltd. Ibid. P. 82.

4. Visibility

How is the visibility of the EU contribution being ensured in the Action?

As defined in the Article 11 of the *Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement between the European Community and the United Nations of 29 April 2003 (FAFA)*, due credit and visibility has been given to the EU Delegation for contributing to this intervention, during meetings with stakeholders, at presentations, public events, in the media and in various documents and reports. In brief, in all communication activities, UNICEF has taken appropriate measures to publicize the fact that this intervention has received funding from the European Union.

Examples during the reporting period include the meeting of the Governing Board of the Union of Municipalities where UNICEF Representative and Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare presented the ongoing child care system reform and acknowledged EU support to the intervention (23 April 2015, PR Center, Podgorica), and the public discussion entitled "Child Rights - Fostering" held in Herceg Novi under the auspices of the municipal assembly of that coastal town (2 March 2015).

As described in activity A2.5.3., key messages of the campaign "Every child needs a family" (which was conducted between September 2014 and January 2015 in the framework of the Child Care System Reform IPA 2010) were promoted at the water polo tournament in Herceg Novi where EU visibility was ensured. The Task manager for the Action and the PR of the EU Delegation were contacted to approve the design of the banner used at the sports venue.

Project folders have been printed for the purposes of meetings and training events, and the design includes the EU flag and information about EU contribution to the Action. The same applies to the template for formal correspondence, invitation to events, event agendas, consultancy advertisements in the daily newspapers etc.

Based on a press clipping conducted by Arhimed, in total 661 media reports were published concerning the Child Care System Reform between August 6th 2014 and July 21st 2015.

In addition, UNICEF published 22 articles/posts on its website/Facebook page¹⁰ concerning the Child Care System Reform as shown in the table below:

UPDATES OF UNICEF WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK AUGUST 6, 2014 – JULY 21, 2015			
Date	Media	Video/Text	Topic
4 September 2014	WEBSITE	Text	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
4 September	FB	Text/Link	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
10 September	WEBSITE	Text	Support vulnerable families to reduce reliance on institutional care
10 September	FB	Text/Link	Fostering
10 September	FB	Text/Link	Fostering
11 September	FB	Text/Link	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
11 September	FB	Text/Link	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
18 September	FB	Text/Photo album	Fostering
19 September	FB	Link	Fostering
29 September	FB	Text/Photo Album	Fostering
1 October	FB	Text/Photo	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
2 October	FB	Text/Video	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
29 October	WEBSITE	Text	UNICEF calls for protection of the privacy of children in state care
29 October	FB	Text/Photo Album	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
30 October	FB	Text/Link	Protection of the privacy of children in state care

¹⁰ Facebook posts are counted separately for posts in Montenegrin and English language.

30 October	FB	Text/Link	Protection of the privacy of children in state care
2 March 2015	FB	Photo album	Fostering in Herceg Novi
2 March 2015	WEBSITE	Web story	Fostering in Herceg Novi
6 March 2015	FB	Text/Link	Fostering in Herceg Novi video story
6 March 2015	FB	Text/Link	Fostering in Herceg Novi video story
9 March 2015	FB	Text/Link	Fostering in Herceg Novi web story
9 March 2015	FB	Text/Link	Fostering in Herceg Novi web story

The European Commission may wish to publicise the results of Actions. Do you have any objection to this report being published on the EuropeAid website? If so, please state your objections here.

No objections.

Name of the contact person for the Action:

Benjamin Perks, UNICEF Representative to Montenegro

Signature:

Location: Podgorica, Montenegro

Date report due: 06 August 2015

Date report sent: 06 August 2015