



Two brothers from Türkiye, Ali, 15, and Emre, 17, successfully completed life-skills training supported by UNICEF in a reception centre in Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Humanitarian Action for Children

Europe and Central Asia Region

HIGHLIGHTS

- Children and families in Europe and Central Asia face multiple, overlapping hazards including earthquakes, conflict, disease outbreaks, displacement, mixed migration and such climate-induced disasters as floods and fires. An estimated 5 million children¹ are exposed to flood risks, and more than 29,000 measles cases were reported in Europe for the year, as of September 2025.²
- Mixed migration flows continue to strain services along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes. Nearly 99,000 arrivals were recorded between January and September,³ compared with 170,000 in all of 2024. Armenia continues to host 142,000 refugees, among them 36,000 children displaced by hostilities.⁴
- UNICEF requires \$21.4 million to support governments in delivering inclusive and gender-responsive humanitarian support for the most vulnerable children and their families, and to enhance the shock-responsiveness of systems, including via anticipatory action, in response to slow- or sudden-onset disasters and infectious disease outbreaks.

IN NEED



265,500
refugees and migrants
present in five
countries⁵



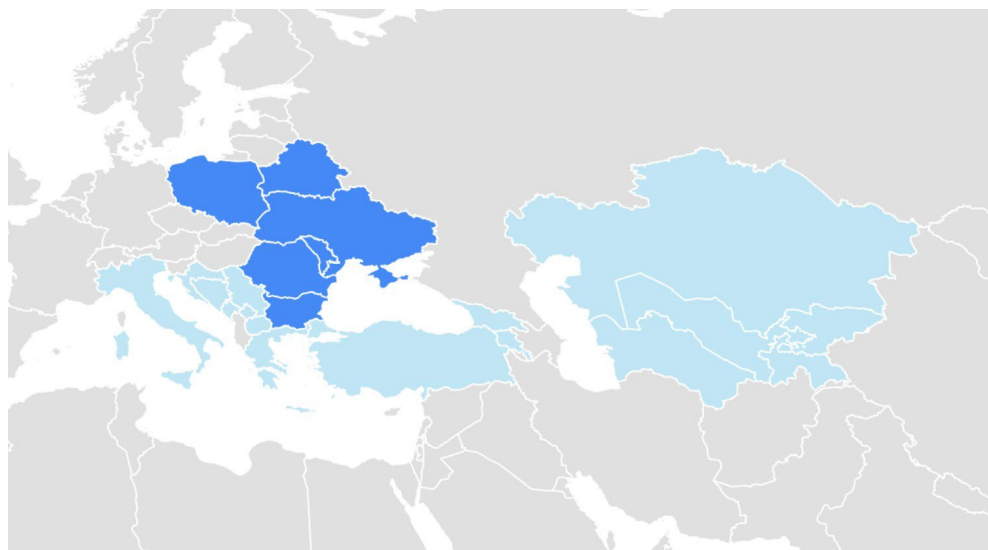
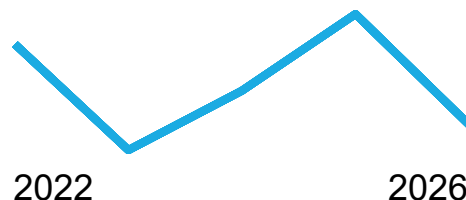
5 million
children exposed to
floods in the region



142,000
refugees present in
Armenia⁶

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$21.4
million



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The countries in light blue are embedded in this regional appeal; those in dark blue are covered under a multi-country appeal.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Children across Europe and Central Asia continue to be disproportionately affected by multiple, overlapping crises. The most vulnerable are most at risk, including children living in poverty, children with disabilities and children from Roma, refugee and migrant communities. Although most countries in the region are classified as high or upper-middle-income, child poverty remains widespread, with 21.5 percent of children (around 42 million children) living in monetary poverty.⁷ Natural hazards, conflicts, disease outbreaks, mixed migration and the growing impact of climate change combine to further exacerbate children's vulnerabilities.

An estimated 160 million children⁹ are exposed to multiple climate and environmental hazards, including 26 million affected by extreme heat, 48.6 million by drought and water scarcity, 5 million by floods and 2.9 million by wildfires⁸ in the region. More than 29,000 measles cases were reported in Europe as of September 2025, driven by vaccine hesitancy, weakened health systems and declining MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) immunization coverage, which now ranges from 23 to 99 per cent for MMR1 and 62 to 99 per cent for MMR2.¹⁰

Mixed migration flows continue to strain national systems along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes. Nearly 99,000 new arrivals were recorded between January and September in 2025, compared with 170,000 in all of 2024. Altogether 265,500 refugees and migrants, including 19,400 children, remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia. Children on the move, particularly those who are unaccompanied and separated, face heightened risks of violence, exploitation and abuse. While the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum strengthens guarantees for children's rights, significant implementation gaps remain, particularly in access to information, guardianship and child-sensitive reception procedures. In addition, rising anti-migrant sentiment in parts of Europe exposes children and families – particularly unaccompanied minors – to increased discrimination, exclusion and protection concerns.

Armenia hosts more than 142,000 refugees, including 36,000 children. Geopolitical tensions and instability in neighbouring regions increase the risk of new population movements into Europe and Central Asia.¹¹

Children are increasingly exposed to climate and environmental hazards. Coupled with ongoing conflicts in Europe as well as in neighbouring regions, cross-border tensions, mixed migration flows and the fragile geopolitical context of Europe, Central Asia and beyond, this underscores the need for sustained investments in preparedness and shock-responsive systems that safeguard the rights of children in times of crisis.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

Guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF will deliver principled humanitarian assistance and technical support in response to ongoing and emerging crises, addressing critical service gaps for affected children, families and host communities. Interventions will focus on providing essential services and supporting national and local systems, ensuring children and families have adequate access to health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, child protection, gender-based violence, mental health and psychosocial support, education and social protection services. In responding to mixed migration movements, UNICEF will engage with national and regional entities, working closely with the European Union, and advocate for the alignment of national policies with international standards. UNICEF will support governments to strengthen child protection and social inclusion systems through the development of sustainable guardianship frameworks, expanded alternative care options and the promotion of child-focused policies.

Within the implementation of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, UNICEF will ensure that legal commitments result in tangible protection outcomes for every child on the move. In Armenia, UNICEF will continue strengthening health, education and social service systems to provide inclusive mental health and psychosocial support service for refugee and host community children and their families. This includes building professional capacities, improving referral mechanisms, supporting related policies and creating safe and inclusive spaces in schools and communities. In response to public health emergencies, UNICEF will support partners in strengthening surveillance, risk communication and the continuity of essential health services during outbreaks and health-related shocks.

To scale up preparedness, UNICEF will adopt a multi-hazard approach and leverage regional and subregional coordination mechanisms to strengthen institutional capacities. Efforts focus on enhancing risk and foresight analysis, establishing early warning systems, advancing anticipatory actions, conducting system stress tests and supporting contingency planning. Targeted technical assistance and policy support will help develop child-sensitive, inclusive and gender responsive preparedness and response systems that ensure accountability to affected populations. UNICEF will strengthen surge capacity while advancing preparedness for shock-responsive social protection systems and the use of humanitarian cash transfers. This approach promotes localization and national ownership, empowering governments and communities to lead humanitarian action, while encouraging development partners to invest in sustainable, long-term solutions.

Strategic partnerships with the European Union, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for Southeastern Europe, the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, international financial institutions, academia and United Nations agencies will be key to mobilizing resources, fostering innovation and strengthening accountability.

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Gayane, mother of 3, fled conflict with her children, including her son with autism and her baby, whom she carried in a banana crate. In Armenia, she faced winter with limited income and rising costs. Despite hardship, she showed strength caring for her family. UNICEF and partners provided cash assistance, helping her buy food, medicine and essentials.

"When you have a large family with all kinds of pressing needs, this kind of support is invaluable. Some may think that one-time assistance doesn't solve serious problems, but it has made a real difference for us," says Gayane.

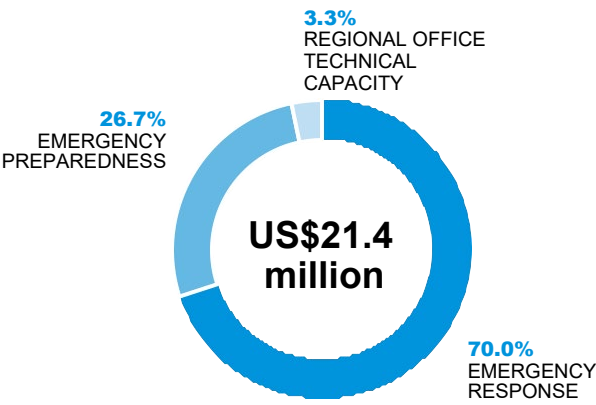
Cash assistance helps Gayane and her family navigate the winter months in their new home in Etchmiadzin, Armenia.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

In 2026, UNICEF is appealing for \$21.4 million to address the ongoing and emerging humanitarian needs and strengthen systemic preparedness in the Europe and Central Asia region.^{12 13} This appeal focuses on building shock-responsive systems and reinforcing national and local capacities to deliver inclusive, child-sensitive services before, during and after crises.

Timely funding will enable UNICEF and its partners to respond effectively to ongoing and emerging crisis, targeting the most vulnerable, including children on the move. It will also support anticipatory action and swift response to sudden-onset emergencies not covered by other appeals.

Within available resources, UNICEF will work to ensure that governments uphold the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that all children, regardless of their origin or background, have access to protection and assistance, where possible via national systems.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$)
Emergency response	14,983,305
Regional office technical capacity	700,000
Emergency preparedness	5,721,695
Total	21,405,000

ENDNOTES

1. UNICEF, 2025. Global Child Hazard Database. <https://unicef-ccri.projects.earthengine.app/view/global-child-hazard-database>
2. World Health Organization (2025). Weekly Epidemiological Update on Measles and Rubella – September 2025. WHO Regional Office for Europe.
3. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ministry of Interior (Italy), Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria) and Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria) and Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia).
4. This includes 115,358 newly registered refugees and 26,700 already present in the country. Statistics are compiled from data provided by the Government of Armenia. Since registration is ongoing, amendments to figures may occur, including retroactively. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/arm/58>; https://www.unhcr.org/am/wp-content/uploads/sites/123/2022/09/IARP-Report_FINAL_Digital.pdf.
5. This includes refugees and migrants present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Serbia and estimated refugee arrivals through December 2026. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
6. Government of Armenia.
7. UNICEF calculations based on data from Eurostat and other sources.
8. UNICEF Children's Climate and Environment Risk Index (CCRI) 2025. <https://unicef-ccri.projects.earthengine.app/view/global-child-hazard-database>
9. UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, In Focus: Children, climate change and environmental degradation, UNICEF, Geneva, 2024.
10. UNICEF, immunization coverage estimates dashboard, online database, July 2025, available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/immunization-coverage-estimates-data-visualization/>.
11. European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Annual Risk Analysis 2025/2026, Frontex, Warsaw, May 2025.
12. Countries include: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Greece, Georgia, Italy (Refugee and Migrant Response), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan. *All references to Kosovo in this appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
13. The funding requirement for Syrian refugees in Türkiye, including earthquake response for the refugees, is covered under the Syrian Refugee and Other Vulnerable Populations Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.