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Session 4: Disaggregation and inclusive data

Data availability and disaggregation for SDG indicators related to children

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A. Introduction

1. All [54 countries](#) in UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia region ratified the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). State parties are obliged to submit regular (usually every five years) reports to the [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) on the implementation of the Convention in line with the Committee's mandate to monitor its implementation. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party.

2. The review of the most recent recommendations for the region shows that almost all countries (52 out of 54) have received at least one recommendation from the Committee to improve their data collection and analysis systems to have updated, reliable and disaggregated data on children.

Recommendations of the CRC to improve data and evidence on children



3. Some of these are about improving the overall data collection system (50 countries), such as the following 2022 recommendation to Germany:

Strengthen its data-collection system with regard to both qualitative and quantitative indicators that encompasses all areas of the Convention, and ensure that the data are disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic origin, nationality and socioeconomic background.

4. Some are more specific, focusing on certain rights or groups of children. Thirty-nine countries were recommended to improve data disaggregation by ethnicity (10, even more specifically on Roma children), 41 countries by disability and 15 by migration status.

Distribution of data- and evidence-related CRC recommendations by clusters



5. These recommendations stem from the need to monitor and ensure that all children can enjoy all their rights. There is a need to concentrate efforts towards providing data and evidence to transform the successful delivery of the desired results for children and help realise their rights.

6. Undoubtedly, discussions on SDG indicators have been extremely useful in shedding light on data gaps, including data on children, and creating some sense of urgency among policymakers and NSOs. However, the progress has been uneven, and the importance attached to SDG indicators seems to have somewhat diminished over time in some countries of the region. Now that we are at the mid-point in the 2030 Agenda implementation, we can take stock and see where the region is regarding the measurement and data on children.

7. Child-related SDG indicators are defined somewhat differently by UNICEF and OECD. There are also several regional and country classifications. However, broadly speaking, one can group child-related SDG indicators into four categories.

- a) Indicators with important implications for children but not directly targeting children, usually based on administrative data sources. For example, **Indicator 1.a.2**: Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)
- b) Composite indicators that contain child-specific measures but are not limited to children, such as **Indicator 3.8.1**: Coverage of essential health services
- c) Population-based indicators that require either a sub-indicator or age disaggregation, including for children, such as **Indicator 1.3.1**: Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems or **Indicator 1.2.1**: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line
- d) Indicators that specifically focus on children (population under 18) or even a narrower age group of children, such as **Indicator 16.2.1**: Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers or **Indicator 4.2.1**: Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being.

B. Data availability on selected child-related SDG indicators in the UNECE region

8. Conducting a comprehensive review of data availability and disaggregation for all the child-related SDG indicators would probably be too ambitious. In this paper, however, we conduct a review

for 16 SDG indicators, for which UNICEF is either a [custodian or co-custodian](#) and which belong to different categories above.

9. We use the [SDG monitor by ETH Zurich](#) to assess the availability based on the SDG database, with some methodological differences well captured and described. The analysis captures all [56 UNECE members](#), a slight difference from the Europe and Central Asia region of UNICEF.

10. We use the SDG monitor by ETH Zurich to assess the availability. The SDG monitor is based on the SDG database and uses the notion of series to represent the lowest hierarchy level in the SDG data framework (612 series → 248 indicators → 169 targets → 17 goals). Indicators may contain one or multiple series, targets comprise one or multiple indicator(s), and goals comprise multiple targets. For this analysis, 16 indicators are represented by 31 series. The analysis covers the [UNECE region with its 56 members](#), a slight difference from the Europe and Central Asia region of UNICEF.

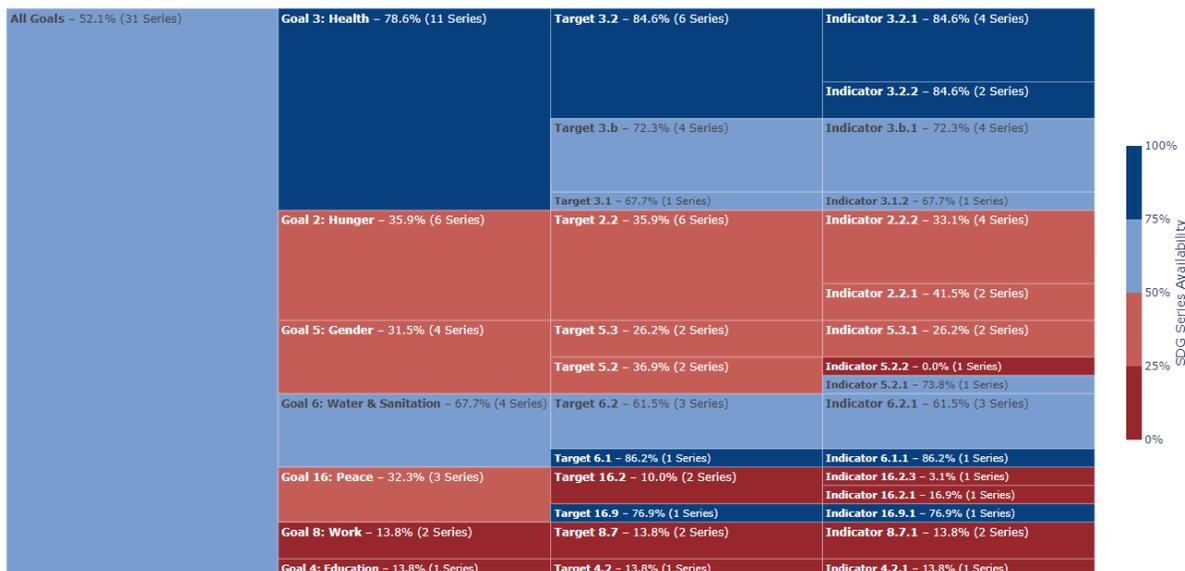
11. We use the below three measures to assess the availability of data in the region for the 16 indicators and their 31 series and rank countries accordingly.

- Data for at least one year since 2015
- Data for at least one in three years on average for the period of 2020-2022, and
- Data for at least two years since 2015

12. Some clarifications and precautions are worth mentioning:

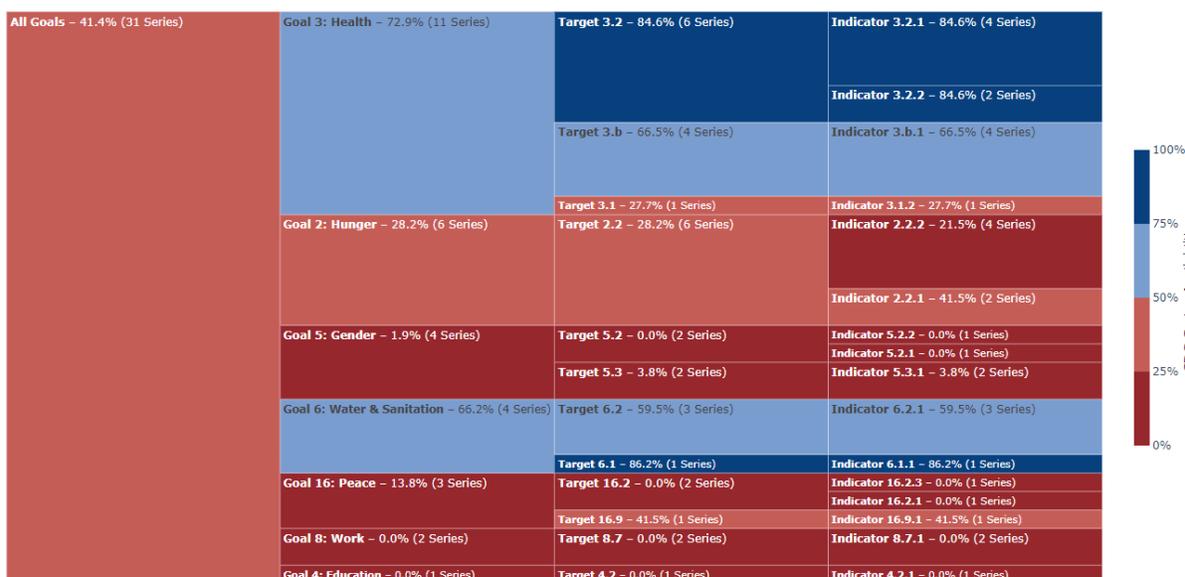
- The number of indicators for which UNICEF is a custodian or co-custodian is actually 17, but indicator 5.3.2 on female genital mutilation was not included in the calculations for the region.
- The data availability measure of the SDG monitor is largely consistent with that of the UNSD, but there are some subtle differences, which are described on the portal.
- This is a rapid overall analysis of data availability for a group of indicators based on one source and does not take into account the specifics of each indicator. For example, the availability of data for some indicators (e.g. related to child mortality and nutrition) is skewed upwards due to the use of modelled estimates, which are not real data points.
- All indicators are treated equally when frequency (data for at least two years since 2015) of data is assessed. For some indicators, which are solely based on household survey data, having two data points during the last 7 years may be too ambitious to expect. On the other hand, for indicators based on administrative data sources more frequently updated data should ideally be the case.

Data for at least one year since 2015



13. The availability for the region barely makes it above 50%. High availability of data (more than 75% for all the countries) is observed for four indicators (3.2.1, 3.2.2, 6.1.1 and 16.9.1). SDGs 3 and 6 are better off. For six indicators, the availability falls below 25%. When we look at the situation by country, 11 countries have data for at least 75% of the series of these 17 indicators, while 30 countries fall within the '50-75%' range. Four countries, Georgia, North Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, have data availability at 90% or higher. No country is reporting data on indicator 5.2.2 on sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner. For details by country and indicator, see *Annex 1*.

Data for at least one in 3 years on average for the period of 2020-2022

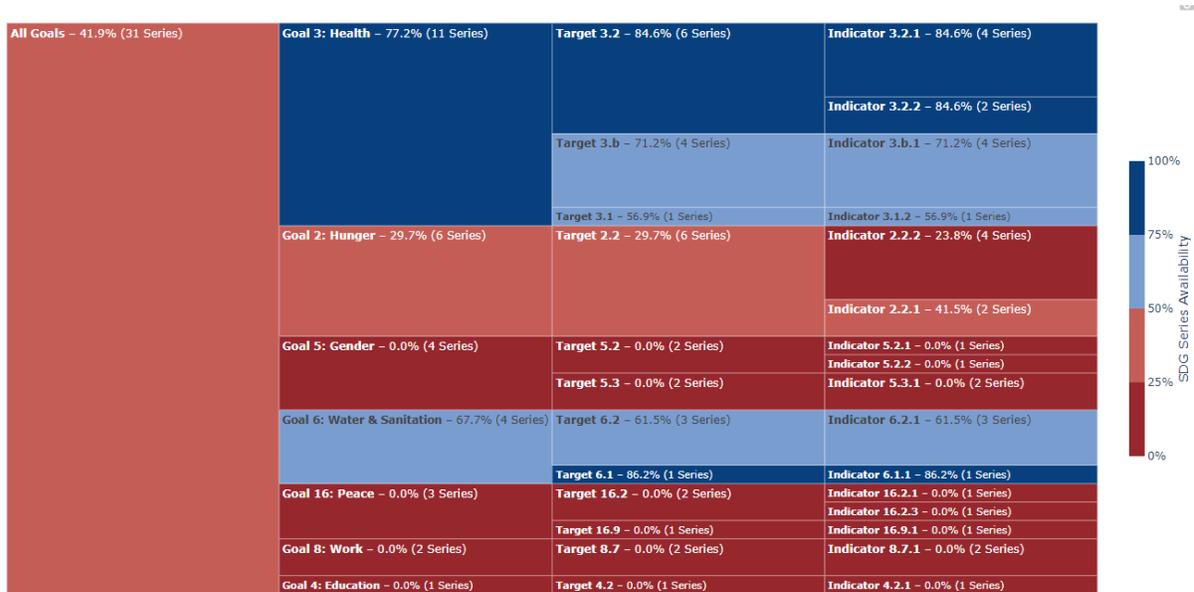


14. This measure may be a proxy for the availability of relatively more recent data, although some of the newly collected data may not have been reflected in the SDG database yet. The data availability

falls to 41% overall. Data availability is more than 50% for only five (out of 17) indicators. No country has data on 6 SDG indicators for the last three years.

15. Breaking this down by country, it is clear that no country has data availability at 75% or more. For more than half of the countries in the region, the data availability falls below 50%. Portugal and Georgia are the only two countries passing 60%. For eight indicators, no country has any recent data in the SDG database. See *Annex 2*.

Data for at least two years since 2015



16. This is important to understand how the situation of children is changing over time and whether countries are making progress towards the SDG targets. The overall data availability is 41% when ‘at least two data points since 2015’ is the criterion. For nine indicators, no country has trend data to assess progress. Five countries (USA, Tajikistan, Republic of Moldova, Turkmenistan and Georgia) reach 60% data availability. 30 countries have data for less than 50% of the series. See *Annex 3* for details.

Discussion

17. There may be multiple reasons for low data availability, varying from recently developed definitions to inadequately child-sensitive data sources and measurements.

18. *Child-focused/sensitive data collection*: some indicators require child-focused surveys or at least the application of child-sensitive methodologies in the existing surveys. Many countries at the top of the ranking tables have conducted one or more [MICS surveys](#). Wave 7 questionnaires of MICS surveys can measure up to 40 SDG indicators and provide disaggregation by multiple markers of disparity, including disability, migration status, ethnicity and so on. Particularly countries in the Western Balkans have conducted both national and sub-national surveys. A particular feature of MICS in the region is oversampling of households with children to reach efficiencies in the sample size and cost in low-fertility contexts of many countries.

19. There are also other countries in the ranking, such as Portugal, the United States of America and Germany, without a recent MICS with relatively better data availability on child-related SDG indicators, whose experience and data sources may be worth exploring.

20. *Prioritising children in the selection of SDG indicators*: it is also possible that existing sources and measures may be prioritised during the regional or country-level adaptation process. This may be efficient but eventually ineffective, preventing the measurement of critical indicators on children. Very few [SDG indicators adopted by Eurostat](#), for example, are relevant to children or can be disaggregated by children.

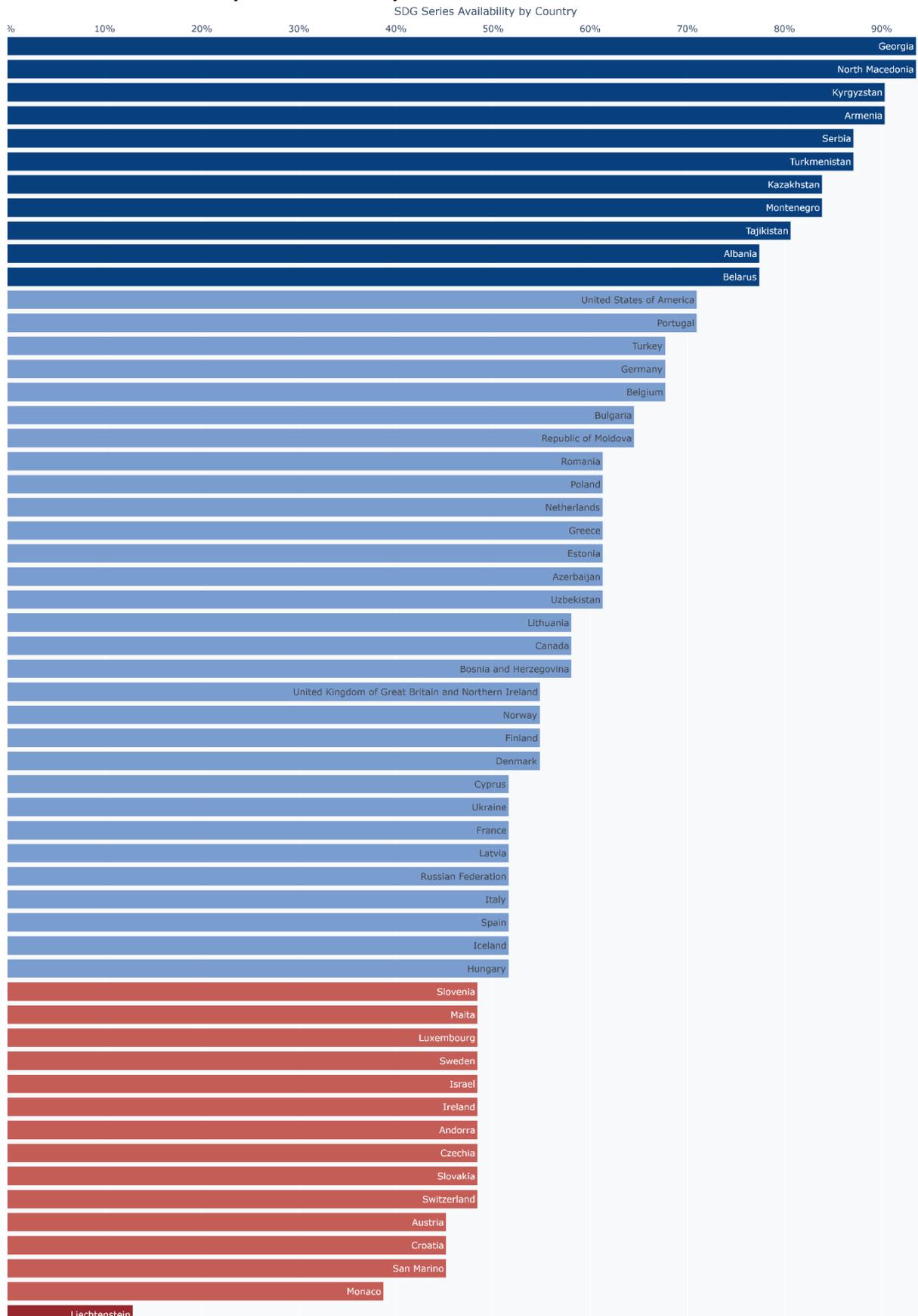
21. *Disaggregation*: the above analysis on the overall availability does not even go to the details of disaggregation to understand better the vulnerability of different groups of children. Particularly when it comes to children with disabilities, very often no disaggregation is available, applied definitions are not child-specific, or the definitions do not even follow the spirit of [the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on Persons with Disabilities](#). Sometimes SDG databases are not able to include disaggregation by disability by design even if the data may be available. The recently adopted [Guidance of the Conference of European Statisticians](#) recommended the use of internationally comparable estimates of the number of children with disabilities, including the adoption of the UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module (CFM), harmonisation of basic information on persons with disabilities in administrative data and mapping, planning and implementation of systematic data collection on children with disabilities.

22. *Counting and reporting on all children*: it is also worthwhile mentioning that the adopted SDG indicators left behind a particularly vulnerable group of children not in families and often not even in regular schools. These are children in residential care. The data represented by household surveys such as EU SILC and MICS only represent children in households, whether they live with their biological parents or in family-type care. Yet, as the limited available data show, children in residential care often have much worse outcomes than their peers. The NSOs that are part of the [TransMonEE network](#) make continuous efforts to improve the data availability and disaggregation for children in residential care. Yet as the [Feasibility Study for a European Child Guarantee](#) also points out, many EU countries fail to monitor the indicators and work on improving the representativeness and quality of data representing this group of children. For example, most EU member states do not collect reliable data and lack monitoring systems to cover children in alternative care. The [Guidance of the Conference of European Statisticians](#) recommended that countries adopt standardised definitions and classifications for alternative care, as a minimum requirement, measure the stock, inflow, and outflow of children in alternative care and adopt a standard set of disaggregation variables for children in alternative care including age and sex.

23. On the broader issue of data on children and monitoring child rights, the Conference recommended, among other things, that:

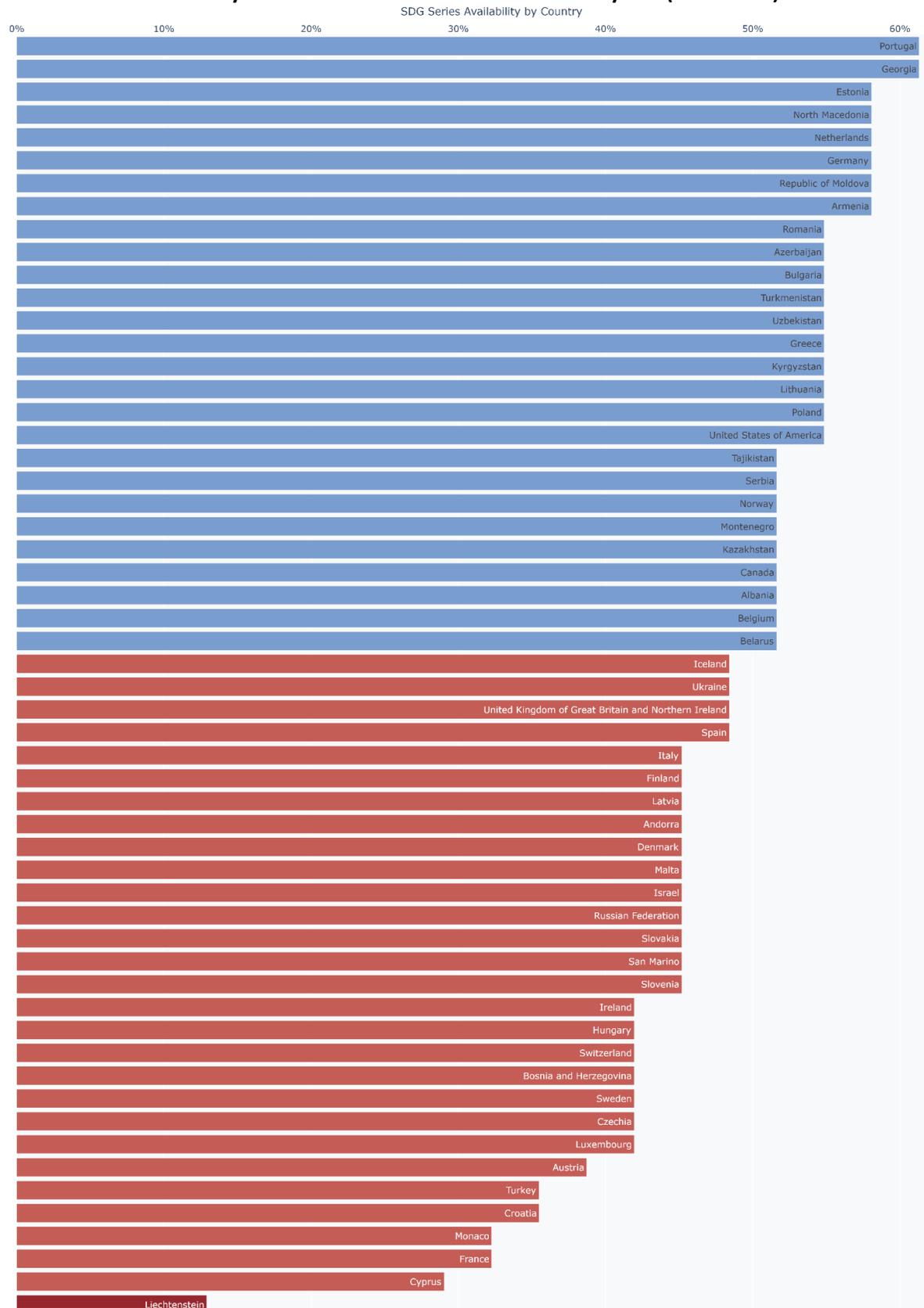
- countries elaborate national indicator plans and invest in the production and dissemination of data on children and youth that are internationally comparable,
- NSOs consider designating a national focal point for child and youth statistics and that countries include children in regular data collection, including child-focused surveys,
- NSOs highlight the situation and needs of children in the main national statistical reports in all relevant policy areas.

Annex 1. Data availability for at least one year since 2015 for 16 child-related SDG indicators



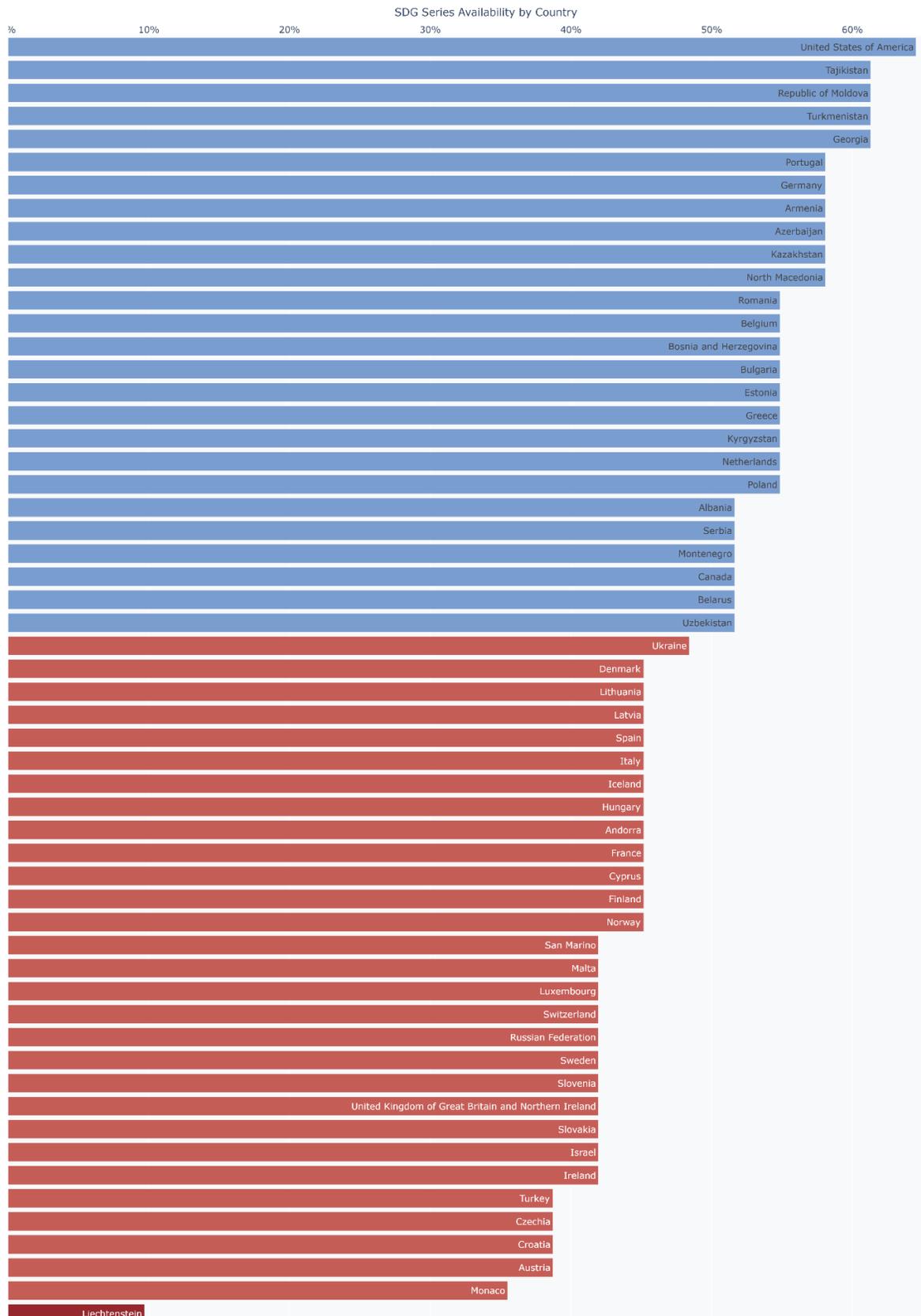
Country / Indicator	2.2.1 Stunting	2.2.2 Malnutrition	3.1.2 Skilled health personnel	3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	3.b.1 Vaccination	4.2.1 Child development	5.2.1 Violence by an intimate partner	5.2.2 Sexual violence by others	5.3.1 Child marriage	6.1.1 Drinking water services	6.2.1 Sanitation	8.7.1 Child labour	16.2.1 Violence against children	16.2.3 Sexual violence by age 18	16.9.1 Birth registration
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Average	48	38%	79%	98%	98%	84%	16%	86%	0%	30%	96%	71%	16%	20%	4%	89%

Annex 2 – Data availability for 16 indicators at least on in 3 latest years (2020-2022)



Countries / Indicators	2.2.1 Stunting	2.2.2 Malnutrition	3.1.2 Skilled health personnel	3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	3.b.1 Vaccination	4.2.1 Child development	5.2.1 Violence by an intimate partner	5.2.2 Sexual violence by others	5.3.1 Child marriage	6.1.1 Drinking water	6.2.1 Sanitation	8.7.1 Child labour	16.2.1 Violence against children	16.2.3 Sexual violence by age 18	16.9.1 Birth registration
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Average	50%	25%	63%	98%	98%	81%	0%	0%	0%	0%	96%	70%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Annex 3 – Data availability for at least two years since 2015 for 16 child-related SDG indicators



Country / Indicator	2.2.1 Stunting	2.2.2 Malnutrition	3.1.2 Skilled health personnel	3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	3.b.1 Vaccination	4.2.1 Child development	5.2.1 Violence by an intimate partner	5.2.2 Sexual violence by others	5.3.1 Child marriage	6.1.1 Drinking water services	6.2.1 Sanitation	8.7.1 Child labour	16.2.1 Violence against children	16.2.3 Sexual violence by age 18	16.9.1 Birth registration
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Average	48%	28%	66%	98%	98%	83%	0%	0%	0%	0%	96%	71%	0%	0%	0%	0%