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BRIEF

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Early Intervention for Children in Ukraine

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What is early childhood intervention?

Early intervention is a service that aims to minimize the impact of developmental delays and disabilities on the daily lives of children and their families. The service supports families to fully integrate into society children who have or are at-risk of having delays and/or disabilities.

The service is provided to families with children under four years of age who have, or are at-risk of having, disabilities and/or developmental delays. The service leverages daily family activities as natural opportunities to teach and stimulate young children. This is done by developing the competence and self-efficacy of parents or legal guardians of children to support the daily functioning and inclusion of the child and family into society.

A team of specialists from different disciplines provide the service. At least three of the following specialists should work together to provide support: psychologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, special educator, social work specialist, social worker, and/or doctor. The mix of specialists depends on the specific needs of the child and family. To reach all children and families in need, the service should be provided in homes of the families, as well as in schools, childcare centers and other places in the community.

This service is supported by several Ukrainian laws and regulations, including CMU Resolution No. 517 of March 26, 2021, on The National Concept for the Development of Early Intervention. The delivery of the service is defined based on the Early Intervention Service Specification (2024). The service also aligns with various international instruments, including the European Strategy on Disability and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRDP).



What are the benefits of the service?

The ECI service is a key service to support the *National Strategy to Ensure the Right to all Children to a Family, particularly Objective 1 Strengthening the Capacity of Families with Children to Care for and Raise their Children*. Under this objective, there is a minimum package of services and benefits, of which early intervention is a critical part.

PROVISION OF THE SERVICE WILL SUPPORT FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TO:

be active and successful participants in different environments – their homes, in childcare, in schools and in communities;

minimize children's functional limitations and the impact of developmental delays on their daily life;

increase opportunities for and participation of infants and young children in their families and communities;

have the knowledge and skills to support the healthy development of children and obtain the services they need; and

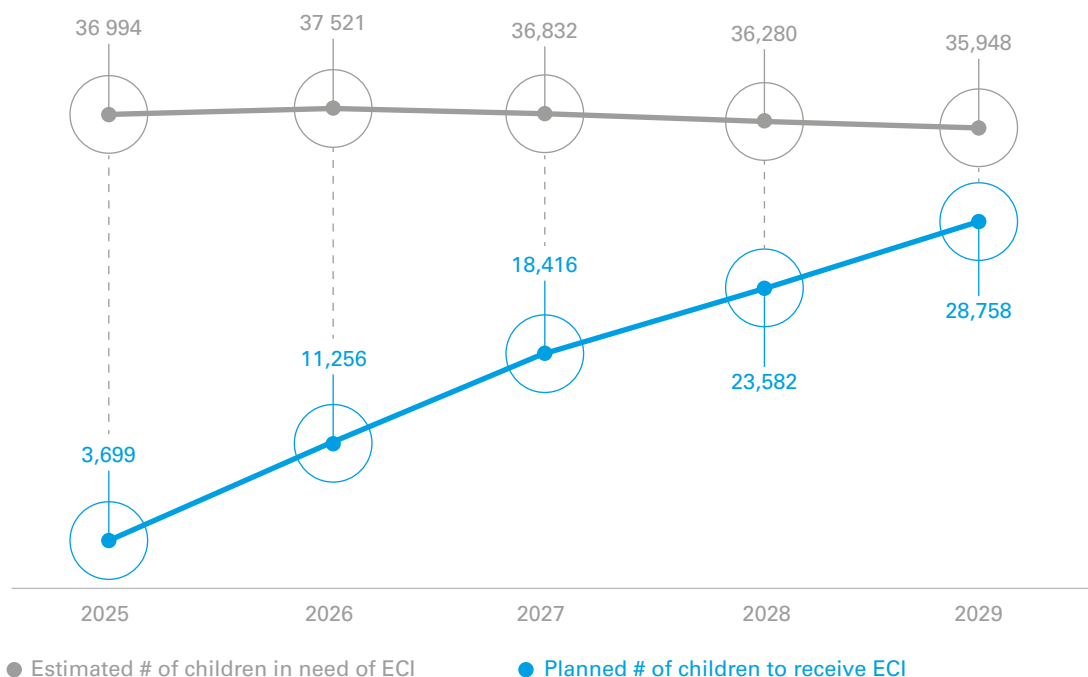
integrate into the community and receive support from their community



Expanding the service

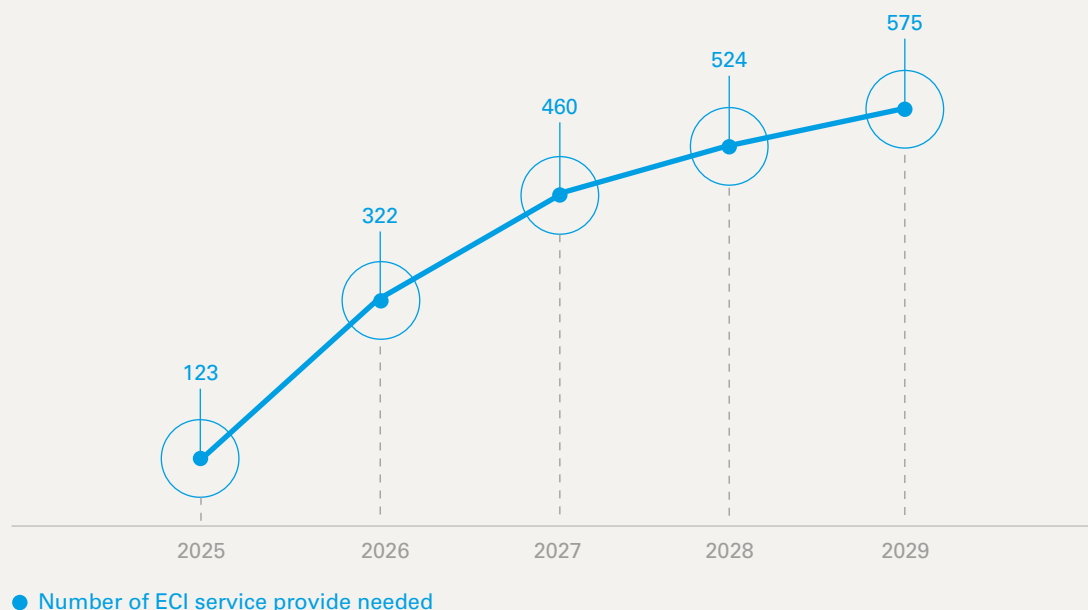
Aligned with the National Strategy and action plan, the government of Ukraine estimates that there will be an average of **36,715 children in need of early intervention services per year** between 2025 – 2029. Given that it will take time to provide adequate financial, human and other resources to expand and ensure the quality of the service, it is estimated that by 2029, eighty percent of children in need will receive the service. The gradual expansion of the service between 2025 – 2029 is presented in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Children needing the service vs planned provision of service for 2025 - 2029



As the service expands, the Government assumes that, **on average, service providers will be able to support 40 children per year**. This assumes that services will be provided by a team of specialists (in social work, psychologist, physical and occupational therapists, speech therapists), and doctors, selected based on the unique needs of each child. Reaching the target number of children each year requires a significant increase in service providers, as illustrated in *Figure 2*. **The goal is that by 2029, there are 575 providers of early intervention services, supporting an average of 50 children per year.**

Figure 2. Number of service providers needed 2025 - 2029

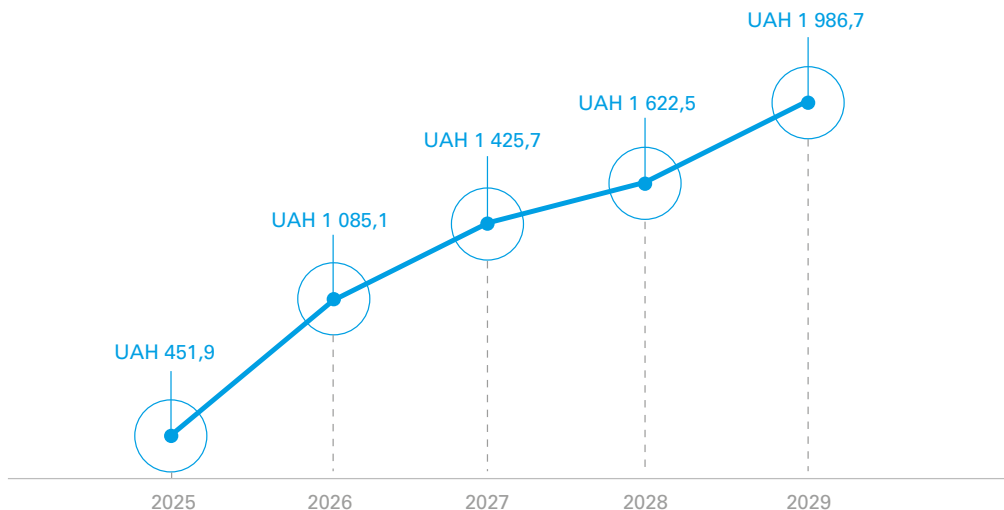




Costs of Service

Between 2025 – 2029, the estimated average cost of delivering the service is 56,441 UAH (\$1,265 USD) per child per year. **The total costs of this planned expansion for 2025 – 2029 is UAH 6.6 billion** (\$145.8 million USD), as displayed annually in *Figure 3*.

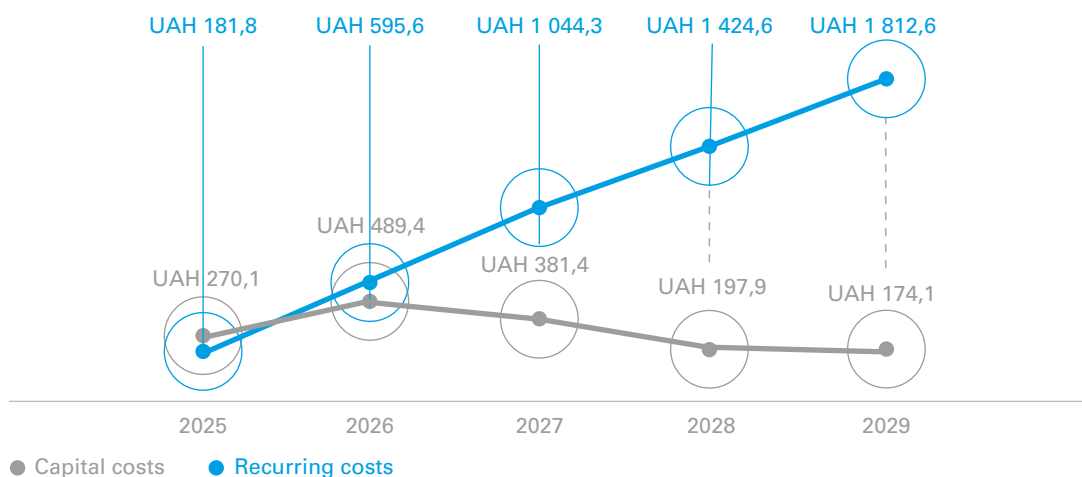
Figure 3. Total costs of creating and implementing service, 2025 - 2029 (UAH millions)



Recurring operational costs increase over time, as more children receive the service. Precise annual estimates are presented in *Figure 4*. Delivering high-quality ECI services requires trained, qualified personnel who deliver the service according to the national standards and in line with global best practices.

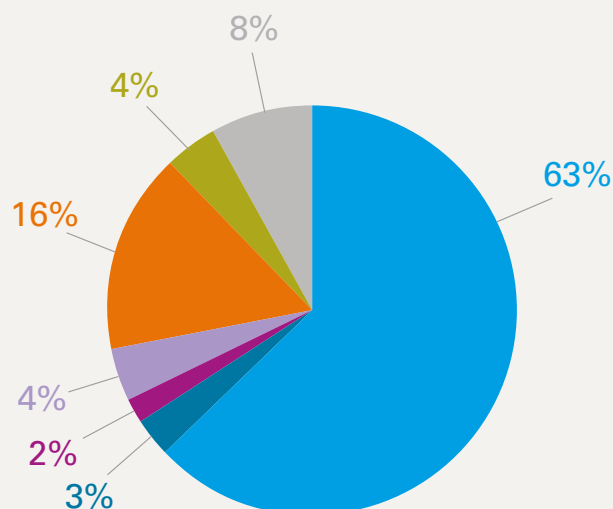
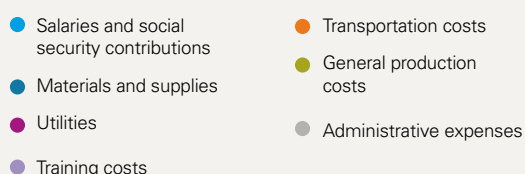


Figure 4. Total annual costs, recurring vs. capital investments, 2025 - 2029 (UAH millions)



An initial one-time investment of UAH 1.5B (\$34M USD) is needed between 2025 – 2029 for capital investments for equipment, renovations, vehicles and other assets. One-time capital investment costs decrease as service providers strengthen their capacity over time. The Government and its partners should plan for an average recurring operational of UAH 1011M (\$22.2M USD) per year for ECI services from 2025 - 2029. Most recurring operational expenses are to pay for salaries and social security of the workforce. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Types of recurring operational costs (% of total 2025 - 2029)



Conclusion

Under the **National Strategy to Ensure the Right to all Children to a Family** and its action plan, early intervention services are one of the main services to be scaled-up, aiming to support and strengthen families and prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families. National and local governments should plan to expand this service, based on a mapping of local needs and existing service providers. While geographic areas may vary, each the government may consider planning service coverage and costs in line with the national estimates, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Guidance for local governments to plan and budget for ECI expansion

Government authorities can estimate the number of children under age 4 who have developmental disorders or are at risk of developing disorders, and ensure services are provided at or above the planned coverage rates below.		
Year	Planned coverage rate	Planned average cost per child
2025	10%	49,145 UAH (\$1,179 USD)
2026	30%	52,916 UAH (\$1,184 USD)
2027	50%	56,708 UAH (\$1,255 USD)
2028	65%	60,410 UAH (\$1,325 USD)
2029	80%	63,030 UAH (\$1,382 USD)

Delivering high-quality ECI services must go beyond financial investments, and requires technical leadership and alignment with global best practices to ensure this service aligns with the following principles:

- ✓ It occurs **early and continuously**. The service should start immediately after birth or as early as possible and includes regularly monitoring the child's development.

- ✓ It is **family centered**. Services are tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each family, and delivered in a manner that supports the family to know and exercise their own rights and decisions.

- ✓ Based on a **social model of disability**. The service does not only focus on the needs of the child, but it also supports the broader context to ensure social inclusion and family wellbeing.

- ✓ It is intensive, **provided at the child's home and/or in other natural learning environments** in a frequency that meets the needs of the child and family.

- ✓ It is **accessible**, including that it is affordable for all families including free for families that cannot afford it. It is also offered as close as possible to the family's residence and accessible for children with disabilities.

- ✓ It is **integrated**, provided by a team of professionals from different disciplines and expertise.

- ✓ Based in the best interests and participation of the child. Professionals delivering the service are to be trained in working with children. The service should not only focus on eliminating or reducing the effects of the impairment, but consider the child's quality of life holistically.

