

In 2017, Turkey made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted a new five-year national action plan to combat child labor and created new bodies to coordinate government policy on child labor and oversee implementation of the new action plan. In coordination with international partners, the government continued to train labor inspectors on child labor and implement projects that provided assistance to more than 1,000 children working in seasonal agriculture. The Prime Ministry introduced a new circular instructing provincial governments to improve provision of educational and other services to the children of seasonal agricultural workers. However, children in Turkey perform dangerous tasks in seasonal agricultural work and in small and medium manufacturing enterprises. Gaps in the labor law and uneven enforcement resulted in insufficient protection of children employed by agricultural enterprises with fewer than 50 workers. Although the government made meaningful efforts in relevant areas during the reporting period, provisions related to the minimum age for work do not meet international standards. In addition, the government continued to make important progress in expanding access to education and other services for several hundred thousand Syrian refugee children, although high poverty rates and limited work opportunities for adult refugees left some refugee children vulnerable to exploitation in the worst forms of child labor.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Turkey perform dangerous tasks in seasonal agriculture and in small and medium manufacturing enterprises. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Turkey.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	6 to 14	2.6 (320,254)
Attending School (%)	6 to 14	92.4
Combining Work and School (%)	6 to 14	1.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		92.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Child Labor Survey, 2006. (7)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

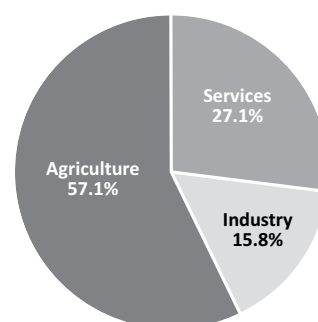
**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of cotton, hazelnuts, citrus fruits, sugar beets, cumin, peanuts, pulses, apricots, melons, and cherries (3; 4; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 5; 1; 2)
Industry	Production of furniture, bricks, shoes, leather goods, and textiles (3; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16) (17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22)
	Construction (2; 23)
	Auto repair† (3; 24)
	Mining† (1; 25)
Services	Street work, including vending small items, carrying bundles in market areas, cleaning car windshields, collecting recyclable materials, and begging (1; 3; 26; 12; 13; 14; 15; 27) (24; 28; 29; 30)
	Working in restaurants and small shops (13; 12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (24; 31; 32; 33; 30)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (2; 30)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14**



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Due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work throughout the country, children living in rural areas often migrate with their families and engage in agricultural work for up to seven months of the year. Significant numbers of these children have limited access to health care and education as a result of migration. (34; 35; 36; 4; 5; 24; 37; 2) Syrian refugee families working in agriculture tended to receive lower pay and live in worse conditions than Turkish workers, increasing the vulnerability of both Syrian adults and children to potential exploitation. (4; 12; 5; 2)

There were over 3.5 million refugees living in Turkey at the end of 2017. (38) Poverty and a lack of meaningful employment opportunities for adults contributed to an increase in child labor among refugee children. (5; 28; 29; 2) Syrian refugee children engaged in child labor in agriculture, street begging, the service sector, and small and medium manufacturing enterprises. (2; 3) Children in the manufacturing sector often worked long hours up to six days per week and earned wages as little as half of what an employer would pay an adult. (3; 15; 16; 19; 20; 21; 22; 2) Monitoring and collecting data on child labor in refugee communities remained a challenge. (2)




In 2017, the government alleged that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, recruited and forcibly abducted children for conscription. Authoritative data on PKK youth recruitment was not available. (2)

Syrian refugee children faced financial barriers to receiving education, including the informal tuition or other fees charged for Syrian children as well as the cost of transportation. (3; 13; 20; 2) Up to one-third of Syrian children living in Turkey had an inconsistency with their registration documents, such as registration in a province other than the one they reside in. School administrators sometimes refuse admission to these children, despite Ministry of National Education instructions that schools should accept these children while registration issues are resolved. (2) In addition, many Syrian children who were able to register for school struggled to integrate into Turkish schools due to the language barrier and lack of access to programs in which they could learn Turkish as a second language. (3)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Turkey has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Turkey's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including with regard to the application of the minimum age for work to all children.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 71 of the Labor Law (39)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 71–73 of the Labor Law; Annex 3 of the Regulation on Principles and Procedures Governing the Employment of Children and Young Workers (39; 40)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		The Regulation on the Principles and Procedures Governing the Employment of Children and Young Workers (40)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 80 and 117 of the Penal Code (41)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 80 of the Penal Code (41)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 77, 103, 226, and 227 of the Penal Code (41)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 37, 38, and 188 of the Penal Code (41)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	21	Article 2 of the Law on Military Service (42)
State Voluntary	N/A*		
Non-state	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	17‡	Article 3 of the Primary Education Law; Education Reform Law (43; 44)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 2 of the Primary Education Law; Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (44; 45)

\* No voluntary military service (46)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (43; 44)

Despite steps to institute additional protections for underage children engaged in agricultural work, gaps in the legal framework protecting children from hazardous child labor persisted. The National Program to Combat Child Labor identifies seasonal migratory agricultural work and work in small and medium industrial enterprises as worst forms of child labor. (2) However, the Regulation on the Principles and Procedures Governing the Employment of Children and Young Workers allows children to do fruit and vegetable picking as light work, and does not prohibit seasonal migratory agriculture. The regulation also allows children age 16 and older to participate in many manufacturing tasks, including manufacturing of clothing despite work in industrial enterprises being included as a worst form of child labor. (40) This inconsistency between national law and policy on child labor created confusion regarding the minimum age for work in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, as well as the jobs within these sectors that are legally prohibited for children. (47; 48)

In addition, although Turkey has a list of activities in which light work may be permitted in the Regulation on the Principles and Procedures Governing the Employment of Children and Young Workers, it does not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken or limit the number of hours for light work. (39)

In addition, Article 4 of Turkey's Labor Law continued to exclude from its coverage agricultural enterprises employing fewer than 50 workers, which are the workplaces most likely to employ children, including in seasonal migratory work. (39) This gap in the law leaves children and other workers in agricultural enterprises with fewer than 50 workers vulnerable to exploitative conditions without legal protection. (11; 24)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Services that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Inspection Board Presidency within the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOLSS)	Implement laws on child labor and hazardous child labor, including regulating work environments and conditions for children. Monitor the implementation of the Labor Law provisions in workplaces under its jurisdiction. (2) Receive complaints about labor law violations, including child labor, through a hotline. (2)
Mentoring and Inspection Presidency within MOLSS	Monitor compliance with laws related to social security of all workers, including child workers. Conduct joint inspections with the Labor Inspection Board Presidency to find children under legal working age who have dropped out of school and refer them to education services. (1)
Turkish National Police and Gendarmerie General Command ( <i>Jandarma</i> )	Enforce the Penal Code, including criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (1; 49) Increase efforts to identify and prevent trafficking of refugees through the Anti-Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking Bureau within the National Police. (30) The Gendarmerie General Command ( <i>Jandarma</i> ) enforces laws in rural areas that are outside of the jurisdiction of National Police. (12; 49)
Department for Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking within the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM)	Coordinate the identification of human trafficking victims, including victims of child trafficking. (33) Manage a hotline providing 24-hour, toll-free support in multiple languages for human trafficking victims. (50)
Ministry of Justice	Prosecute cases of child labor and child exploitation. (1)
Ministry of Family and Social Policy (MFSP)	Coordinate and provide services to children living or working on the street through the Directorate General of Child Services. Operate a hotline to receive complaints about child rights violations, including child labor. (1)

### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Turkey took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including human resource allocation (Table 6).

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown* (12)	Unknown* (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	1002 (12)	1021 (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	21,329† (12)	14,204 (2)
Number Conducted at Worksites	21,329† (12)	14,204 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown* (12)	21 (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	71 (12)	21 (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	Unknown* (12)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (2)

\* The government does not publish this information.

† Data are from January 1, 2016, to November 30, 2016.

Labor inspectors spend the first three years of their careers as assistant inspectors. They receive on-the-job training that includes modules to raise their awareness of child labor and of the legal provisions and enforcement mechanisms that exist to address it, as well as annual continuing education on new laws. (46; 2) In 2017, the number of labor inspectors was likely insufficient for the

size of Turkey's workforce, which includes over 30 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Turkey would employ about 1,960 labor inspectors. (51; 52; 53) The number of inspections reported by the government decreased in 2017, however limited government statistics and a change in the methodology by which the labor inspectorate counted discrete site visits, rendered it difficult to assess trends regarding the overall number of worksites inspected in 2017 relative to 2016. (54)

In 2017, employers who illegally employed children were subject to administrative fines of approximately \$430. Fine amounts are adjusted annually and have undergone small increases in recent years, but remain insufficient to deter violations. (2)

Although reciprocal referral mechanisms remain underutilized, research found that children discovered to be working illegally during the course of inspections were generally referred for social services. (1; 46) In 2017, UNICEF provided training on child labor to 400 labor inspectors with the aim of improving linkages between labor inspectors and social services. (2)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Turkey took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (30)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (2)

During the reporting period, the IOM provided training on preventing trafficking and managing irregular migration flows to 421 government staff responsible for migration-related criminal law enforcement and case management. (30) The Director General for Migration Management (DGMM) increased staff both at headquarters and its provincial offices, increasing capacity to identify human trafficking victims. Compared with the previous year, the government reported a 159 percent increase in potential victims interviewed and a 67 percent increase in victims identified during the reporting period. (30) Although the government continued to improve its efforts to identify victims of trafficking, identification of child trafficking victims remained low. (29; 55)

## **IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR**

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
Child Labor Branch of the Employment Policies Directorate within MOLSS	Coordinate all child labor programs and efforts of the Ministry of National Education, the Child Services Directorate General in MFSP, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and NGOs. (1)
Monitoring and Evaluation Board for Child Labor*	Plan and monitor implementation of the National Program to Combat Child Labor, including through biannual meetings. Held inaugural meeting in December 2017. (2)
The Child Services Directorate General Within MFSP	Coordinate services for children living and working on the streets. (1)

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**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (cont)**

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
DGMM	Coordinate the implementation of migration law, including laws related to irregular migration, refugees, and human trafficking. (56; 57) In 2017, the DGMM actively worked to increase the government's enforcement capacity. (30)
Anti-Trafficking Coordination Commission	Coordinate policy on human trafficking. This commission was founded to replace the National Task Force on Combatting Human Trafficking and met in March 2017. (30)

\* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

In April 2017, the Prime Ministry issued the Circular on Seasonal Agricultural Workers No. 2017/6, developed in cooperation with the ILO. (58) The Circular aims to address the most critical issues facing seasonal agricultural workers, particularly in the hazelnut harvesting industry, and their families by directing provincial governments to develop annual action plans to mitigate problems experienced by seasonal agricultural workers and provide services to these workers and their families. (2; 59) Services required include providing housing and health screening for workers and their families, and providing education and monitoring of school attendance for children. The Circular also established a Monitoring and Evaluation Board to monitor implementation of these directives. (2)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Program to Combat Child Labor (2017–2023)†	Identifies seasonal migratory agriculture, street work, and work in small and medium industrial enterprises as priority sectors for government efforts to combat child labor. Outlines a series of nationwide interventions aimed at eliminating child labor. (2)
National Child Rights Strategic Document and Action Plan (2013–2017)	Sets out the framework and actions for promoting services for children in fields such as health care and education. (60) Includes a section addressing child labor issues. (61; 46)
Second National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking	Outlines Turkey's strategy for the prevention of human trafficking. Identifies children as an exceptionally vulnerable group and calls for special security precautions for children at shelters for victims, as well as increased international cooperation on preventing child trafficking. (50; 62)
National Employment Strategy (2014–2023)	Aims to identify and solve labor market issues, with the goal of job creation and sustained economic growth. Includes the prevention of child labor, especially hazardous work in agriculture, as a focus of the plan, and advocates for increased access to education and strengthened social services as a means of preventing child labor. (63) In 2017, the government adopted action plans for 2017 to 2019. Initiatives in the new action plans include requiring Provincial Employment and Occupational Education Boards to evaluate progress in combatting child labor locally and organizing activities to raise awareness about child labor in connection with the World Day Against Child Labor. (2)
Tenth Development Plan (2014–2018)	Identifies Turkey's strategy and goals for economic development. Includes the priorities of alleviating child poverty and increasing equal opportunity in education. (64) Includes provisions for the prevention of the worst forms of child labor. (46)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the Government of Turkey funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including with regard to adequate funding of programs to address the full scope of the problem in seasonal agriculture and manufacturing.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Conditional Education and Health Care Assistance Program†	Government program that aims to reduce poverty through cash transfers. (65) Provides milk to all primary school children and distributes books free of charge. (66) In 2017, the program reached nearly 190,000 children. (2)



**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (cont)**

Program	Description
Improving Social Integration and Employability of Disadvantaged Persons†	\$41.7 million project jointly funded by the EU and the Government of Turkey. Aims to promote an inclusive labor market with opportunities for disadvantaged persons, with a view to their sustainable integration into the labor force. (67; 68; 2) Also aims to combat all forms of discrimination in the labor market through service and grant components, including allocation of specific grant funds for projects targeting the Roma population. (12; 46; 67; 68) Includes the goal of combating child labor by supporting the entry of working children's parents into the labor market. (67; 68) In 2017, conducted a labor market tendency survey of families in which children were at risk of exploitation in child labor. (2)
Piloting the USDA Guidelines in the Hazelnut Supply Chain in Turkey	\$4.87 million USDOL-funded, 31-month project implemented by the Fair Labor Association in partnership with the MOLSS, Nestle and two of its main hazelnut suppliers, Olam-Progida and Balsu, in Turkey. Pilots a sustainable program to implement the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Guidelines for Eliminating Child and Forced Labor in Agricultural Supply Chains in 1,000 hazelnut plantations in Duzce, Ordu, and Sakarya, with additional interventions implemented in the environs of Sanliurfa and Mardin, the sources of most seasonal agricultural labor in Turkey. (69) In 2017, the project established four Child Labor Monitoring and Referral Centers in Ordu, Duzce, and Sakarya provinces. (2) The project also worked with the Turkish Employment agency to develop a training module for labor contractors and facilitated dialogue between labor contractors and workers. (70)
Integrated Model for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Seasonal Agriculture in Hazelnut Harvesting (2012–2017)	ILO- and MOLSS-implemented project funded by the Association of Chocolate, Biscuit, and Confectionery Industries of Europe (CAOBISCO). Takes an integrated approach to preventing children from working by increasing access to education and improving living conditions of children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor in hazelnut harvesting, building capacity of local and national institutions to prevent child labor, and raising awareness among industry stakeholders and the public. (1) In 2017, the program provided services to 1,125 children, of whom 1,064 were removed from work. (2)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries. Aims to improve the evidence base on child labor through data collection and research in Turkey. (71) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Programs for Syrian Refugee Children†	Government initiatives, in partnership with various international organizations and foreign governments, designed to fund schools for Syrian refugee children and provide Syrian refugee child laborers with additional educational and social services. (12)
Programs focused on Human Trafficking*†	EU-funded projects, both co-managed by the DGMM, that aim to improve human trafficking victim identification and protection through training and capacity-building. (33) The DGMM also began implementing a new UK-funded project on preventing, identifying, and combating trafficking of Syrian refugees. (30) The government also funds shelters for human trafficking victims that provide social services and legal help to victims. (50; 46; 30)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Turkey.

Although the government implemented and collaborated on programs to address child labor in the hazelnut sector, it generally lacked significant, well-funded programs to address child labor in the other areas in which it was most prevalent, including other forms of migratory seasonal agriculture outside of the hazelnut sector, as well as in street work, and small and medium manufacturing enterprises.

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Turkey (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the law effectively prohibits work the government has identified as hazardous for children, such as work in small and medium manufacturing enterprises.	2017
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2017
	Ensure that the law provides explicit protections for children working in small agricultural enterprises.	2009 – 2017
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2015 – 2017
Enforcement	Publish information on the Labor Inspectorate's funding and on the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2015 – 2017

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor to meet the ILO technical advice.	2014 – 2017
	Increase the penalties for violation of child labor laws to an amount sufficient to deter violations.	2014 – 2017
	Publish data relating to the criminal law enforcement of child labor laws including on the initial training for new employees, number of investigations, violations, prosecutions, and convictions.	2014 – 2017
	Ensure that laws prohibiting the trafficking of children are effectively enforced, including by taking steps to identify additional victims of child trafficking.	2015 – 2017
Social Programs	Continue to institute programs to increase access to education and health care for children working in migrant, seasonal agriculture, particularly outside the hazelnut sector.	2014 – 2017
	Continue to expand affordable education opportunities for Syrian refugee children, including by enforcing national directives affording Syrian children access to the Turkish school system at the local level.	2014 – 2017
	Continue to expand programs to address child labor in the sectors in which it is most prevalent, including migratory seasonal agriculture, street work, and small and medium manufacturing enterprises.	2015 – 2017

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