

In 2014, Macedonia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government instituted legislation to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities and amended the Family Law to facilitate children's removal from situations of exploitative child labor in their homes. Additionally, the Department of Justice set up a fund for the compensation of victims of human trafficking, including child trafficking victims. However, children are engaged in child labor, including in begging and the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. The number of day centers and Centers for Social Work (CSWs) remains insufficient to provide shelter and other services to all vulnerable children in need of assistance. In addition, the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child and the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration lack the necessary funding for effective implementation.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Macedonia are engaged in child labor, including in begging.(1-5) Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.(2, 3, 6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Macedonia.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	18.3 (44,161)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	86.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	19.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		74.5

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2011.(8)

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	Farming,* activities unknown (9, 10)
Services	Street work, including vending small items, cleaning vehicle windshields,* and begging (1-5) Working in commercial car washes* (9, 10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2, 3, 6, 11) Forced begging* (2-4, 6)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

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

The majority of children involved in child labor in Macedonia engage in street work such as begging and vending cigarettes and other small items in open markets, in the streets, and at bars and restaurants.(4) Some children engage in begging to help support their impoverished families, while others are forced to beg. The majority of children involved in street work, including begging and forced begging, are of the Roma ethnicity.(2, 4, 6)

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The majority of victims of child trafficking in Macedonia are girls ages 14 to 17 who have been trafficked domestically for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in bars and nightclubs.(3, 11, 12) Girls in Eastern and Central Macedonia have been identified as being at particularly high risk for human trafficking.(3) Girls, particularly Roma girls, are also trafficked for forced marriages, which may result in both sexual and labor exploitation.(3, 11, 12)

The Laws on Primary Education and Secondary Education provide for education in Romani, along with the languages of several other ethnic minorities.(2) Some communities with a predominantly Roma population have access to Romani-language kindergarten and primary school classes.(13) However, the Government was unable to fully meet the demand for instruction in Romani due to a shortage of qualified teachers.(2) In addition, some Roma children had difficulty accessing education due to a lack of birth registration, and Roma children are overrepresented in segregated schools for children with intellectual disabilities.(2, 14) However, increased government funding for programs to eliminate barriers to education has produced positive results in raising school attendance rates among Roma children.(2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Macedonia 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, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 42 of the Constitution; Section 7 of the Labor Relations Act (15, 16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 63, 66, and 67 of the Labor Relations Act (16)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Rulebook on the minimum occupational safety and health requirements for young workers (17, 18)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 11 of the Constitution (15)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 418-c and 418-d of the Criminal Code (19)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 190, 191, 191-a, 192, 193, 193a, and 193b of the Criminal Code (12, 19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 62 of the Law on Defense (14, 20, 21)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 4, 5, 47, and 172 of the Law on Primary Education; Article 3 of the Law on Secondary Education (22-25)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 44 of the Constitution (15)

* No conscription (26)

In February 2014, the Government amended the Family Law to allow for revocation of parental rights to protect children from abuse and neglect by their parents. For cases in which the Center for Social Work determines a second offense by a parent who is encouraging their child to beg, or if the child's life is endangered by begging, the Government has the right to remove the child from the home and initiate the procedure to revoke parental rights, as well as to press criminal charges against the parent.(4, 5)

Also in February 2014, the Government amended the Criminal Code to introduce the crime of "prostitution of a child" to facilitate bringing criminal charges in cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children that lack sufficient evidence to prosecute for human trafficking. The Government also enacted an amendment to Article 418-d of the Criminal Code, Trafficking in Children, to update and broaden the language regarding methods of human trafficking and to impose harsher sentences for other crimes involving commercial sexual exploitation of children.(12)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
State Labor Inspectorate (SLI)	Enforce labor laws, including child labor laws, and transmit cases of suspected criminal law violations to the Public Prosecutor. Inspectors conduct a minimum of 60 inspection visits per month, including both targeted and complaint-based inspections.(27) Formerly a subunit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), in June 2014 the SLI became an autonomous agency as part of a larger reform of the inspection services in Macedonia. This reform did not change the function of the SLI.(4, 28)
Department of Social Inclusion within the MLSP	Work with the police to seek out street children in need of assistance and track cases of forced child labor.(3, 28)
Ombudsman's Office	Work with the MLSP's Centers for Social Work (CSWs) to register complaints about hazardous child labor. Includes a special unit for the investigation of violations of child rights.(4)
Centers for Social Work within the MLSP	Work with the Ombudsman's Office to register complaints about hazardous child labor. Investigate children's participation in street work, such as vending and begging.(4) Work with the Ministry of Interior to form mobile teams consisting of one plainclothes officer and one social worker to identify street children and remove them from hazardous situations. In 2014, identified and registered more than 100 street children.(4)
Ministry of Interior (MOI)	Enforce criminal laws, including laws related to hazardous child labor. Investigate cases of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities through its special police unit for organized crime, corruption, and human trafficking.(4) Work with the CSWs in mobile teams to investigate cases of child labor and forced child labor in street work.(4)
Office of the National Referral Mechanism	Accept reports of potential victims of human trafficking, including children. Alert agencies to investigate the allegations and provide social services for victims.(3, 29) Children found to be victims of child trafficking are removed from the situation, placed in shelters for trafficked children, and given immediate medical and psychological care.(29)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Prosecute possible criminal law violations, including those involving the worst forms of child labor.(30) Has an Organized Crime and Corruption Unit with four prosecutors dedicated to cases of child abuse and worst forms of child labor. The Skopje Basic Prosecutor's Office has eight prosecutors dedicated to child abuse cases.(29)

Law enforcement agencies in Macedonia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, there were 110 labor inspectors responsible for all labor violations, including child labor. Inspectors did not receive training on the content and enforcement of laws relating to child labor during the reporting period.(4) Ministry of Labor officials report that funding to the State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) is adequate to facilitate the fulfillment of its mandate without impediment.(4)

Labor inspectors carried out both targeted and complaint-based inspections, including unannounced inspections, in all relevant sectors allowed by law. No violations of child labor laws were found.(4) The Ombudsman's Office reported that there were no official complaints of child labor in 2014.(28)

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Data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) inspections are not regularly shared among offices, as there is no central computerized database.(27)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the special police unit of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) had five officers dedicated to investigating crimes involving child trafficking and other criminal worst forms of child labor. The MOI also had 80 officers dedicated to enforcing laws against child abuse and exploitation throughout the country's 38 police districts.(4) Additionally, six mixed mobile teams composed of MLSP social workers and police searched the streets for children begging and for children who might be victims of human trafficking. Five of these mobile teams were established during the reporting period.(3, 13) Investigators did not receive specific training on child labor in 2014.(4)

In 2014, the mobile teams removed 100 children from the street and referred them to day care centers.(4) In addition, the MLSP removed 14 children from their families and initiated 10 procedures for revoking parental rights due to abuse and negligence. These children were placed with foster families or at institutions for homeless children.(4) The police also identified six child trafficking victims. All victims were referred to shelters that provide medical and psychological care for rehabilitation.(4) Charges were pressed against two individuals for child trafficking; the cases are still pending.(4)

The Prosecutors' Office pursued four cases of child trafficking in 2014 and obtained a conviction that resulted in a 13-year sentence.(12) The Prosecutor's Office suffers from underfunding, and the process required to investigate and gather evidence for human trafficking cases can be lengthy and complex.(29) Consequently, although human trafficking cases are given high priority and are tried by the Organized Crime and Corruption Prosecutor's Unit at the main court in Skopje, these cases sometimes remain in the court system for years without conclusion.(4, 29) Information on the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties implemented for criminal acts involving worst forms of child labor other than child trafficking were not available.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Children	Coordinate efforts to protect children's rights, including by preventing and eliminating child labor, through the provision of social services.(4) Develop and oversee implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child.(31)
National Coordination Body for Implementation of the Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Sexual Abuse of Children and Pedophilia	Implement the National Action Plan. Led by the MLSP and made up of representatives from relevant ministries and NGOs.(17, 31) Maintains a hotline for reporting sexual abuse of children and children on the street.(17, 29, 32)
National Coordination Body for Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect	Oversee implementation of the National Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children.(33)
National Commission for Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration	Coordinate the work of all institutions involved in combating trafficking in persons. Led by the MLSP.(4) In 2014, organized regular meetings to assess human trafficking in Macedonia.(12) Includes the Sub-Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Children, which serves as an advisory body to the National Commission on all forms of child trafficking, including child trafficking for labor exploitation.(4, 13)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Macedonia has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Action Plan for Children on the Streets (2013–2015)	Aims to combat the harmful effects of street work by providing such children with services, including education.(34) Intends to provide a systemic and holistic response to the issue of children on the streets, with an emphasis on social services, health care, and inclusion in the educational system.(17, 34)

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

Policy	Description
National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration (2013–2016)	Focuses on preventing human trafficking by reducing the vulnerability of at-risk populations, reducing the demand for sexual services, improving victim identification, and increasing efforts to combat trafficking in persons for forced begging and labor exploitation.(11) As part of the Plan, in 2014, the Department of Justice set up a fund for the compensation of victims.(4, 11)
National Strategy for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010–2020)	Addresses children's rights, such as social protection, social inclusion, health, education, and employment.(4) Includes goals of increasing birth registration among Roma and other minorities, expanding patrol services to identify and support street children, and improve the provision of social services for children involved in street work and begging. Implemented by the MLSP.(4, 35)
National Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children (2013–2015)*	Aims to provide a safe living environment for children by improving prevention and detection of abuse and neglect of children, as well as by providing treatment and rehabilitation of children who have been victims of abuse and neglect. Outlines a plan for the implementation of these improvements on a national and local level.(28)
National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child (2012–2015)	Aims to promote equity, inclusion, and efficiency in the provision of services for children, such as health care and education.(36) Includes providing direct assistance to withdraw children from child labor, rehabilitating victims, and providing children with better access to primary education.(37)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

The implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child has been slow, with no funds specifically earmarked for its implementation, monitoring, or evaluation.(1, 38) There is also a lack of sufficient Government funding for the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration, which may hinder its implementation.(11)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Macedonia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Conditional Cash Transfer Program‡	Government program that provides cash assistance to certain Roma students who stay in school and discourages their involvement in street work and begging.(29)
Day Centers‡	MLSP program that operates three government day centers and supports two others operated and partially funded by NGOs. Day centers provide services, including education, healthcare and counseling, to children working in the streets.(2) The Government also supports a small transit center for street children.(39) During 2014, day centers provided services to 100 children.(4)
Center for Victims of Human Trafficking and Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking‡	Government program that fully funds the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking, a shelter for domestic trafficking victims. MOI funds the provision of basic services to victims, while MLSP supports reintegration of victims with their families. NGOs collaborate in the operation of the shelter.(17, 40) The Government provides partial support to the Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking, which is operated by NGOs.(40)
Centers for Social Work (CSW)‡	Government program of approximately 30 CSWs that provide services to vulnerable groups, including street children and child victims of human trafficking. Services include counseling, education, and assistance with obtaining registration documents.(4, 12) CSW staff members have been trained on human trafficking issues.(40)
Social Worker/NGO Mobile Teams‡	Government social workers from CSWs and representatives of NGOs work in the field of three major municipalities to detect human trafficking victims and at-risk individuals, including street children. Teams then work to find solutions to address the needs of these vulnerable persons, including providing support to human trafficking victims and their families, and implementing reintegration programs.(17) The Government also funds education seminars for parents on the dangers of allowing children to work and beg on the streets.(29)
Cut the Thread of Labor Exploitation and Trafficking in Children	Government program through which the National Commission for Human Trafficking and NGOs conducted a series of awareness-raising activities on trafficking in persons, as well as a fundraising campaign to assist street children.(3)
Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education‡*	MLSP project implemented in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund and 19 government units. Aims to support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in preschool.(41)
Children-at-risk Breaking the Cycle of Social Exclusion of Children in Macedonia	MLSP and UNICEF-implemented project for improved social protection for street children. Developed standard operating procedures for addressing the needs of street children, and supports the Government's goal of greater inclusion of the Roma population.(42)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Macedonia.

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The number of day centers and CSWs is insufficient to reach all vulnerable children in need of assistance. Reimbursement to NGOs that provide services at human trafficking shelters also suffered from delays due to budget constraints at the state level.(3)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Macedonia (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law prohibits the use of children in illicit activities.	2013 – 2014
Enforcement	Provide training on the worst forms of child labor to labor inspectors and criminal investigators.	2014
	Provide labor inspectors with a system to record data on inspections, including number of inspections, number of violations found, and number of citations issued, and make this data publicly available.	2009 – 2014
	Provide sufficient funding to the Prosecutor's Office and expedite prosecutions of those responsible for child trafficking.	2013 – 2014
	Make information on the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties implemented for criminal acts involving worst forms of child labor other than child trafficking publicly available.	2014
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into national policies, including the National Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children.	2014
	Provide sufficient funding to implement the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child (2006–2015).	2012 – 2014
	Provide sufficient funding to implement the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration.	2014
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming.	2013 – 2014
	Reduce barriers to education by increasing the number of teachers who can provide education in the Romani language, ensuring that children are able to obtain registration documents, and eliminating the placement of children in school for children with intellectual disabilities on the basis of ethnicity.	2014
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor.	2013 – 2014
	Increase the number of day centers and CSWs, and strengthen efforts to reimburse NGO service providers at shelters for human trafficking victims, as scheduled.	2009 – 2014

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