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In 2013, Macedonia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Macedonia adopted a 3-year Action Plan for Children on the Streets and released an assessment of the country's anti-trafficking efforts. Additionally, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy opened a fourth day center that provides services, including education, to children working in the streets. However, children continue to engage in child labor in begging and the worst forms of child labor 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. Some children, particularly those from minority ethnic groups, continue to lack access to education due to factors such as the associated costs of schooling and lack of identity documents.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Macedonia are engaged in child labor in begging and the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation.(1) 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.	9.9 (30,052)	
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	84.7	
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	11.5	
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.0	

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2009, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(2)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3, 2005.(3)

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* (4)
Services	Begging (1, 5, 6)
	Selling small items in open markets, bars and restaurants, and in the streets (1, 5)
	Cleaning vehicle windshields* (1)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Domestic service as a result of trafficking* (4)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of trafficking (1, 7, 8)
	Forced begging* (1, 9)

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

Some children in Macedonia engage in begging at the behest of their parents or other family members, while other children are forced into begging. (1, 9) The majority of children involved in work on the streets, including begging, are of the Roma ethnicity. (8, 10) Girls, particularly Roma girls, are trafficked for fraudulent marriages, which may result in them being sexually exploited or forced into domestic service. (4, 6) Girls in Eastern and Central Macedonia have been identified as being at particularly high risk for trafficking. (6)

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

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The Government reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2009 that school attendance was lowest among the Roma population.(11, 12) Statistics published by UNICEF in 2013 state that 14 percent of Roma children do not attend primary school, and 62 percent of Roma adolescents do not attend secondary school.(10) This is due, in part, to their lacking identity cards, which are needed to access education and other social services.(8) Not attending school increases children's vulnerability to involvement in the worst forms of child labor. The 2008–2009 UNICEF-sponsored study found some families struggled with the cost of school supplies.(4, 11)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON 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
TO THE	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ATTORA	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 relevant 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	Constitution; Labor Relations Act (13, 14)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Labor Relations Act (14)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		Rulebook on the minimum occupational safety and health requirements for young workers (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 11 of the Constitution (13)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 418 of the Criminal Code (16, 17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 191–193 of the Criminal Code (16)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		(4)
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Law on Defence (18-20)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Law on Primary and Secondary Education (21, 22)
Free Public Education	Yes		Constitution (13)

^{*}No conscription or no standing military.

Research found that children working in the informal sector do not have the same protections under child labor laws and regulations as children working in the formal sector. Moreover, the ILO Committee of Experts has noted that minimum age for employment provisions in the Labor Relations Act do not apply to work in the informal economy, in which most child labor occurs in the country.(23)

By law, school instruction in Macedonia is offered in Macedonian, Albanian, Romani, Turkish, and Serbian, and the number of minority group children receiving instruction in their native tongue has increased.(8, 10) Macedonia's Criminal Code prohibits the use of children in organized begging. However, research found no legal prohibition on the use of children in illicit activities.(16, 24)

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

Role
Enforce labor laws, including child labor laws.(9) According to Government reporting to the ILO, inspectors conduct a minimum of 60 inspection visits per month. Must carry out at least one inspection visit per year at enterprises in most sectors, including industry, agriculture, and construction.(25) Are authorized to issue on-the-spot citations for labor law violations. Transmit cases of suspected criminal law violations to the Public Prosecutor.(25-27).
Work with the police to seek out street children in need of assistance and track cases of forced child labor.(6)
Investigate violations of children's rights and accept complaints of such violations.(9)
Accept reports of potential victims of trafficking, including children. Alert agencies to investigate the allegations and provide social services for victims.(9, 15) 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.(9)
Enforce criminal laws. The role of a special police unit of the MOI is to investigate organized crime, corruption, and trafficking.(9) Address child labor in begging and forced begging in the country. MLSP Office of Social Inclusion and MOI "Mobile Teams" made up of one plain clothes police officer and one social worker, seek out street children in order to discourage such activity and encourage school attendance.(6, 9)
Prosecute possible criminal law violations, including those involving worst forms of child labor.(27) The Office has an Organized Crime and Corruption Unit with five 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.(9)

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

Labor Law Enforcement

As of 2013, there were 110 labor inspectors responsible for all labor violations, including child labor.(9) Data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) inspections are not regularly shared among offices, as there is no central computerized database.(25) During 2013, the Inspectorate did not remove any children from child labor situations during its inspections.(9) The Ombudsman's Office reported that there were no official complaints of child labor in 2012, the most recent year such information is available.(28)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2013, 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 Ministry also had 80 officers dedicated to enforcing laws against child abuse and exploitation throughout the country's 38 police districts. (9) Additionally, five mixed mobile teams of MLSP social workers and police searched the streets for children begging and children who might be victims of trafficking. (6) Social workers and police completed anti-trafficking courses as well as training on how to identify victims of labor exploitation. (6, 7)

As a result of the mobile teams' patrols, 50 children were removed from the streets, and 11 possible cases of trafficking were identified and passed along for investigation.(6) During 2013, MLSP removed 20 children from eight families, revoking parental rights due to abuse and negligence. These children were placed with foster families or in institutions for homeless children.(9)

The Government reported nine cases of confirmed child trafficking in 2013, involving a total of nine victims. One child was a foreign citizen and the rest were from Macedonia.(6, 9) The children were trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation (one child), sexual exploitation (four children), and fraudulent marriage (four children.)(6) Five of the children were trafficked internally and the rest were trafficked abroad. The cases were referred to the

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Special Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime and Corruption and trials are ongoing.(9) During 2013, there were convictions against six defendants for child trafficking related to cases that began in 2010 and 2011.(9) All the defendants received prison sentences.(6) The Prosecutor's Office, however, suffers from underfunding.(9) Trafficking cases can require complex and lengthy investigations and evidence gathering. Consequently, sometimes trafficking cases linger in the court system for years without conclusion.(9) Research did not find information on criminal law enforcement actions involving cases of commercial sexual exploitation that were not the result of trafficking. Moreover, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has noted that data on crimes involving other types of worst forms of child labor besides trafficking are unavailable.(29)

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 and provide them services in line with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.(5, 9) Protect against child labor.(9) Develop and oversee implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child.(4)
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 MLSP and made up of representatives from relevant ministries and NGOs.(4, 15) A hotline it established for reporting sexual abuse of children and children on the street remains active.(9, 15, 30)
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.(30)
National Commission for Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration	Coordinate the work of all institutions involved in combating trafficking in persons.(28) Chaired by the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.(31) Consists of a Subgroup on Trafficking of Children.(6)

In 2013, the Government established Local Anti-Trafficking Commissions in two municipalities: Bitola and Tetovo. (32)

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 services including education.(33) Adopted in 2013, the plan is intended 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.(15, 33)
National Action Plan (NAP) against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration, 2013–2016	Focuses on preventing trafficking by reducing the vulnerability of at-risk populations and reducing the demand for sexual services as well as on increasing efforts to combat trafficking for forced labor.(7, 9, 34) In 2013, the National Rapporteur on Trafficking and Smuggling published its fourth annual report, providing a comprehensive assessment of trafficking in persons activities during 2012.(34)
National Strategy for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2010–2020*	Addresses children's rights, including social protection, social inclusion, health, education, and employment. Implemented by the MLSP.(9)
National Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children 2013–2015*	Outlines an Operational Plan for the implementation of the Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children 2013.(15)
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.(35) Includes direct assistance to withdraw children from child labor, rehabilitate victims, and provide better access to primary education.(28)

^{*} The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

The implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child has been slow, with no funds specifically earmarked for implementation, monitoring, and/or evaluation. (5, 24)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, 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.(9)
Day centers‡	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy program that operates four day centers and funds two others operated by NGOs that provide services, including education, to children working in the streets.(8, 33) One of the government centers is open only in the summer months, as street children have not been found in the area (Ohrid) in the winter.(9) Government also supports a small transit center for street children in the capitol, Skopje.(8) The fourth center in Prilep was established during 2013.(33) Also during the year, day centers provided services to more than 100 children.(9)
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.(15, 34) Government provides partial support to the Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking, which is operated by NGOs.(34)
Centers for Social Work (CSW) ‡	Government program of approximately 30 CSWs that provide services to vulnerable groups, including street children and child victims of trafficking.(7, 15) Services include counseling, education, and assistance with obtaining registration documents.(15) CSW staff members have been trained on trafficking issues.(34)
Social Worker/NGO Mobile Teams‡	Government social workers from CSWs and representatives of NGOs work in the field of three major municipalities to detect 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 trafficking victims and their families, and implementing programs for reintegration.(15) Government also funds education seminars for parents on the dangers of allowing children to work and beg on the streets.(9)
Cut the Thread of Labor Exploitation and Trafficking in Children	Government program through which the National Commission for Trafficking and NGOs conducted a series of awareness-raising activities on trafficking as well as a fundraising campaign to assist street children.(6)
Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education‡*	MLSP project implemented in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund and 19 government units, under the Decade of Roma Inclusion and Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia. Aims to support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in preschool.(36)
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.(37)

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

The number of day centers and CSWs is insufficient to reach all vulnerable children in need of assistance.(8, 10) There is also a gap in the capacity of staff to provide adequate services in rural areas and to children of ethnic minorities.(10, 29) Reimbursement to NGOs that provide services at trafficking shelters also suffers from delays.(6)

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).

[‡] Program is funded by the Government of Macedonia.

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.	2013
	Ensure that children who are working in the informal sector benefit from the same minimum age protections as children working in the formal sector.	2013
Enforcement	Provide labor inspectors with a system to record inspections and investigators with a system to record data on crimes involving all worst forms of child labor, and make both sets of data publicly available.	2009 – 2013
	Provide sufficient funding to the Prosecutor's Office and expedite prosecutions of those responsible for exploiting children in trafficking.	2013
Government Policies	Study the impact that the National Strategy for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion may be having on child labor.	2013
	Provide sufficient funding to implement the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child (2006–2015).	2012 – 2013
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming.	2013
	Improve children's access to education by providing assistance to families to purchase school supplies and by ensuring children have identity documents.	2009 – 2013
	Study the impact that the Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education project may have on child labor in Macedonia.	2013
	Increase the number of day centers and CSWs, and expedite reimbursement of NGO service providers at shelters for trafficking victims.	2009 – 2013
	Increase the capacity of the staff at the day centers and CSWs to meet the needs of rural and ethnic minority children.	2013

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