

In 2020, Kosovo made a moderate advancement to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government drafted multiple regulations for the implementation of the Law on Child Protection to address child labor in the informal sector. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare also began conducting a survey on children engaged in hazardous work and the Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor drafted an action plan for central- and local-level institutions and civil society organizations on how to coordinate efforts to prevent hazardous child labor. In addition, the government passed the Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which provides a policy framework for the protection of children's rights, including child labor. Moreover, the government worked with UNICEF to launch a new program that aims to increase the availability of early childhood education and promote inclusion of children with disabilities into the education system. However, children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, including loading and transportation of goods and begging. The Labor Inspectorate and Centers for Social Work also face financial and human resource constraints, which may impede their ability to adequately address child labor.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, including loading and transportation of goods and begging. (1-3) No recent data were available, but the 2013 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) determined that 5,398 children in Kosovo were subjected to child labor. (4) The study also found that 2,168 Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian children were subjected to hazardous child labor practices, especially street work. (5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kosovo. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	11.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2013–2014. (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	Farming, including operating agriculture machinery (2,3,8)
	Forestry, including operating machinery and transporting wood (3,9)
Industry	Mining, including underground extraction of coal by hand (3,8)

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

**Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction and manufacturing, including operation of tools in hazardous worksites (3,8,9)
Services	Street work, <sup>†</sup> including vending small items, <sup>†</sup> manual transport of goods, <sup>†</sup> and begging <sup>‡</sup> (3,8)
	Scavenging at dumpsites <sup>†</sup> (8,10)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor <sup>‡</sup>	Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,8,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,8,9,11)
	Use in illicit activities (8,12)

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

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




Kosovo is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. (1,3,9,13,14) In addition, children are sometimes forced into labor, such as in massage parlors, by organized criminal groups. (1,13,15,16) Kosovar children and children from neighboring countries, especially Albania, are also forced into street work including begging, primarily in Prizren and Pristina. Most of these children come from the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian minority ethnic groups. (9,13,15,17-22) Economically vulnerable Kosovan children are sometimes forced to work in construction and agriculture to support their families. (9)

Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma children, especially girls, sometimes experience difficulty accessing education, as a birth certificate is required to attend school in Kosovo and many births go unregistered. (11,17,23-26) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (27) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare began conducting a survey on the state of children engaged in hazardous labor practices in Kosovo. In addition, during the school year, the Ministry of Education provided virtual classes in the Romani language to address concerns about marginalization of Roma children. (3,8)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kosovo holds a unique status *vis-à-vis* UN recognition that complicates its ratification of international agreements (Table 3).

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

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

Article 22 of Kosovo’s Constitution incorporates the UN CRC into its national legal framework. (28) Despite Kosovo’s unique status, the country worked with the UN through the Common Development Plan (2021–2025), which was implemented by the UN Kosovo Team and focused on promoting international standards and human rights. (29,30)

The government’s laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 7 of the Law on Labor (31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 20, 23, 26, 27, and 45 of the Law on Labor (31)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Administrative Instruction No. 05/2013; Article 45 of the Law on Labor; Administrative Instruction No. 2008 (31-33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Law on Labor; Articles 163 and 165 of the Criminal Code; Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking (31,34,35)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 165 and 166 of the Criminal Code; Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking; Articles 21 and 22 of Administrative Instruction No. 10/2017 (34-36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 232 and 234 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47 and 62 of the Law on Child Protection (35,37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 267–273 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Law on Child Protection (35,37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 6 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 149 of the Criminal Code; Articles 51 (2) and 59 of the Law on Child Protection (35,39)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (40)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (40)

\* No conscription (41)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (40)

The Law on Child Protection entered into force in July 2020. (8,42) During the reporting period, the government began enforcement of the law and developed implementation guidelines to support its goals, including tackling child labor practices in the informal sector economy. (8,19,39,43) The law prohibits violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children, including using a child as a beggar, and prohibits the use of children in additional illicit activities. (8,42,43) However, Kosovo does not meet international standards as the establishment of the minimum age for work in Article 7 of the Labor Law does not apply to children in informal work. Additionally, the law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation of children as the use of a child for prostitution is not prohibited.

### 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 framework of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Inspectorate	Conducts inspections to enforce child labor laws, removes children engaged in hazardous work, and refers children engaged in hazardous work to regional Centers for Social Work. (3)
Kosovo Police (KP)	Enforces criminal laws on forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Anti-Trafficking Directorate, enforces laws on child trafficking. (2,3,8) Operates under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (44)

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Justice	Enforces criminal laws on forced child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children through special anti-human trafficking coordinators and mechanisms. (8)
Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	Conducts education inspections on balance of students' school and work hours. (45)

From January to March 2020, four ministries divided the duties of the former Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW): (1) Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, (2) Ministry of Economy, (3) Ministry of Health, and (4) Ministry of Finance. The interim government restored these competencies to the MLSW. (3,46) There is limited inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and aforementioned government entities, which were tasked with the duties of the former MLSW in 2019. (2,47) Multiple entities have reported on insufficient institutional capacity at the central and municipal levels to improving funding and human resources for the Centers for Social Work (CSWs). This lack of institutional commitment posed an obstacle to the ability of CSWs to address cases of child labor in a competent and adequate manner. (3,8,12,48)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to combat child labor (Table 6).

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$830,333 (2)	\$983,813 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	40 (2)	37 (8)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (2)	Yes (8)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (2)	N/A (8)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (2)	Yes (8)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (2)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (46)	7,105 (8)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (46)	7,105 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	116 (46)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (46)	0 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (2)	0 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (31)	Yes (31)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (8)

In 2020, the Labor Inspectorate continued with public- and private-sector inspections, with a special focus on the construction and agriculture sectors, areas in which child labor is known to occur. (3) During the reporting period, the Labor Inspectorate did not conduct inspections in areas with ethnic Serb majorities. (8) Labor inspectors have the authority to inspect private farms; however, due to a lack of human resource capacity to adequately cover all sectors and regions, the CSWs, which also face human resource and budgetary constraints, typically conduct these inspections. (8,27,47,49)

The Labor Inspectorate had an overall strategy for conducting child labor inspections and incorporated identification of child victims of human trafficking in its strategy for 2017–2021. (8,50–53) Labor inspectors receive initial training when hired; however, these trainings do not cover child labor as a separate category. (8,53) Over 7,000 labor inspections were conducted at worksites during the reporting period. (8) In 2020, the ILO trained 48 Labor Inspectorate staff in two sessions focused on identification, referral, and tracking of child

labor cases. In addition, the ILO held two virtual workshops in conjunction with the Kosovo Justice Academy to facilitate understanding of the judiciary's challenges in dealing with child labor throughout the country. (8)

The Labor Inspectorate's mandate allows it to investigate employment contracts for working children between ages 15 and 18 who have entered into an employment contract for a limited period. When child labor is discovered, the Labor Inspectorate issues the penalty and works with the Kosovo Police (KP) to remove the child from child labor. (8) In addition, the Labor Inspectorate coordinates inspections with CSWs for suspected abuse of children under the age of 15. According to NGO and media reports, the number of cases reported does not fully reflect the actual number of child labor cases due to the high level of labor market informality. (8,9,14)

## CRIMINAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for prosecutors and judges on identification of forced begging cases.

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (2)	No (8)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (2)	No (8)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (2)	No (8)
Number of Investigations	15 (54)	62 (8)
Number of Violations Found	15 (54)	79 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	15 (54)	37 (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (2)	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (54)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (8)

During the reporting period, the KP initiated multiple raids, held awareness campaigns, and conducted a series of anti-trafficking trainings for law enforcement. (8,53) In November 2020, the Kosovo Police Trafficking in Human Beings Directorate participated in a 3 day training from the FBI on labor trafficking and conducting Internet investigations for trafficking in persons and child exploitation cases. (53) In addition, KP officers received separate training on human trafficking, including forced labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities. The KP reported that resources and training related to child labor were sufficient. (8) The Kosovo Prosecutorial Council participated in meetings with the ILO throughout the year to identify issues with data collection on child labor violations in the country. During the reporting period, the KP reported 12 violations related to trafficking of children and referred 16 children to social services. (8)

The government did not provide information on the number of convictions or penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor for inclusion in this report.

The KP tracks children referred to CSWs as a result of investigations conducted by its domestic violence and human trafficking units. (8,55) However, authorities did not consistently identify cases of forced begging, which are instead typically classified as parental neglect or abuse. (8,13,48)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies to combat child labor. Oversees and provides policy guidance for activities to prevent and eliminate child labor. (8) Comprises representatives of government agencies, KP, trade unions, and an NGO. (2) During the reporting period, the Committee conducted its two annual plenary meetings and held several ad hoc member meetings. In addition, the Committee drafted an action plan for central- and local-level institutions and civil society organizations to coordinate efforts on the prevention of hazardous child labor practices. (8)
Child Labor Monitoring System	Addresses child labor at the municipal level, identifies and provides existing child services, documents child labor trends, and evaluates local responses to child labor. (56) During the reporting period, child labor monitoring coordination focused on preventing children from engaging in ore mining and other methods of economic exploitation including physical labor in hazardous conditions. In addition, municipalities and families were engaged in efforts to reintegrate children into the educational system. (8)
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP)	Coordinates policy implementation, and monitors and reports on actions to combat child trafficking through a National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (NATC). (15,57) NATC is a deputy Interior Minister. (14,58) Includes representatives from the government, judiciary, municipal offices, NGOs, and the international community. (44,58) During the reporting period, NAATIP conducted meetings with stakeholders to discuss areas for improvement, potential legislative changes, and coordination amongst anti-TIP partners. In addition, NAATIP published its annual report on the monitoring of anti-TIP efforts throughout the country. (53)
Municipal Local Action Committees	Aim to prevent and eliminate child labor; report to the Child Labor Monitoring System. Members include representatives from schools, municipal education departments, and KP. (8) In 2020, the Committees participated in multiple ILO-sponsored activities in partnership with the Kosovo government. (3,8)

Since 2013, the government has been collecting and processing data on labor violations, which are made available to all ministries and law enforcement bodies. (56) During the reporting period, MLSW coordinated activities to revitalize several child labor monitoring mechanisms at the local level, including efforts to prevent children from engaging in ore mining and other forms of hazardous labor. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture provided child labor-focused briefings to agricultural inspectors to provide an understanding of hazardous child labor in agricultural activities. (8)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including funding to support the implementation of policies.

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

Policy	Description
Children's Rights Action Plan (2019–2021)	Passed in January 2019. (2) Aims to improve social, economic, and legislative rights and the protection of children through developing institutions at the local and national levels. (51,59) Includes an accompanying Children's Rights Strategy (2019–2023). (51,59) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) indicated that the Strategy would include objectives dedicated to the prevention, protection, and reintegration of children involved in hazardous child labor practices including ore extraction, farming, and street work. (8)
Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023)†	Adopted in 2020. Calls for a comprehensive framework of policies for the protection of children's rights, including the prevention, protection, and reintegration of children involved in hazardous child labor practices such as street work and underground ore extraction. (8)
Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities (2016–2020)	Focused on employment, social issues, healthcare, and housing for the Ashkali and Roma communities. Aimed to strengthen individual's rights and full integration into society. (60) A special educational component promoted inclusive education for children from these communities. (61) During the reporting period, the strategy was active in partnership with Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian civil society organizations. (3)
Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2017–2021)	Emphasizes the inclusion of vulnerable minorities in the education system, especially for preschool children of the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities. Establishes regulations at the municipality level to facilitate preschool enrollment and raise awareness of school attendance and enrollment. (62) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan during the reporting period.
Regulation on the Implementation of the Rights of Children Through a Child-Friendly Municipal Governance System	Protects and promotes the rights of children. Ensures that municipalities are child friendly and guarantees that all children receive social services, education, and safety. (63) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the policy during the reporting period.

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.



During the reporting period, the judiciary improved the government's ability to combat trafficking of children involved in begging and other illicit activities. (8,11) However, the government did not finalize the review process for the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking for 2020–2024. In addition, the 2020 Action Plan Against Human Trafficking was not fully implemented during the reporting period. (53)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government 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 funding.

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

Program	Description
Hope and Homes for Children†	Government-funded NGO shelter. Accommodates child victims of abuse and human trafficking. (49) During the reporting period, the MLSW continued to implement the shelter program. (8)
UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025)*	Funded and implemented by the UN Kosovo Team. Promotes international standards and human rights safeguards of migrants and the social protection and educational inclusion of the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities. (29) Prioritizes four areas: accountable governance; inclusive and non-discriminatory social policies and services; resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic development; and social cohesion. During the reporting period, the Program contributed to improved access to healthcare and education for disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities and children from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. (3,8)
UN Kosovo/UNICEF Program (2021–2025)*	Introduced in 2020 to provide guidance for the UNICEF project team in Kosovo. (8) Aims to increase availability of early childhood education opportunities, inclusion of children with disabilities, and justice for children through data generation and evidence-based policymaking. (30,64)
The Helpline‡	Government-operated hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. (13) During the reporting period, the Helpline continued to be active. (8)
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor	USDOL-funded global project implemented by ILO to (1) improve the knowledge base on child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking; (2) improve awareness of these issues through the use of data-driven techniques; (3) strengthen policies and improve the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through national, regional, and global initiatives; and (4) strengthen partnerships to accelerate progress in combating child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking. In Kosovo, the project aims to build the capacity of the government and other stakeholders to address child labor. Additional information is available on the USDOL <a href="#">website</a> . (65)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,13,66)

The government continued to support social assistance to at-risk families and provided assistance with virtual education and textbooks. (8) During the reporting period, the government also continued to conduct awareness-raising activities in minority areas to encourage school registration. In addition, three municipalities established inter-agency case management roundtables led by CSWs to encourage more cooperation amongst local-level child protection officials. (8,53)

## 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 Kosovo (Table 11).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Criminalize the use of children in prostitution.	2020
	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to children in informal work.	2020
Enforcement	Ensure that Centers for Social Work have sufficient capacity and resources, such as shelter and short-term care services, personnel, and training to address the specific needs of child labor victims.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that labor inspectors conduct child labor inspections on private farms and in areas with ethnic Serb majorities.	2017 – 2020

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Incorporate topics on child labor, including hazardous child labor, in both new employee training and refresher courses; ensure trainings on new child labor laws for all labor inspectors.	2017 – 2020
	Ensure Kosovo Police authorities are trained to identify cases of forced begging as child labor instead of parental neglect or abuse.	2020
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of convictions and penalties imposed.	2020
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking for 2020–2024 is implemented.	2020
	Ensure that the annual Action Plan Against Human Trafficking is implemented.	2020
	Ensure that the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan is active.	2020
	Ensure that the Regulation on the Implementation of the Rights of Children through a Child-Friendly Municipal Governance System is active.	2020
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2020
	Eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by making additional efforts to register Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma children at birth.	2011 – 2020
	Increase the number of shelter spaces and short-term services available for child labor victims.	2020

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