

In 2017, Macedonia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted the National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Trafficking and Illegal Migration, which aims to increase efforts to combat forced labor, including forced child begging. The government also helped three new local anti-trafficking commissions in Prilep, Gevgelija, and Veles to design their first ever local action plans on human trafficking. In addition, the government opened a new hotline to register complaints of child labor, street children, and child abuse. However, children in Macedonia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. The law's minimum age protections do not apply to children who are self-employed or working outside formal employment relationships. In addition, the National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Children and the National Coordination Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect did not carry out activities during the reporting period.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Macedonia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and commercial sexual exploitation. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8) 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 to 14	18.3 (44,161)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	86.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	19.5
Primary Completion Rate (%)		91.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (9)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4, 2011. (10)

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 (7)
Services	Street work, including vending small items, cleaning vehicle windshields, scavenging, and begging (2; 3; 4; 5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 5; 6; 11; 12; 13; 7; 8)
	Forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 3; 5; 6; 7; 8)
	Domestic work as a result of human trafficking (1; 11; 14; 15)
	Forced labor as wait staff and dancers in restaurants, bars, and nightclubs (6; 15)

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

Most children involved in child labor in Macedonia engage in street work, including vending small items, cleaning vehicle windshields, and begging. (3; 4; 6; 7) Some children engage in begging to help support their families, while others are forced to beg. The majority of children involved in street work are of the Roma, Egyptian, and Ashkali ethnicities. (1; 3; 4; 7) Macedonia lacks recent, comprehensive data on the nature and extent of child labor in the country. (7)

The majority of victims of child trafficking in Macedonia are girls, between the ages of 14 to 17, who have been trafficked domestically for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor in restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. (1; 11; 14) Girls in eastern

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and central Macedonia have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. (16) Roma girls, especially, are also trafficked for forced marriages in which they are subject to sexual and labor exploitation. (1; 11; 14; 17; 8; 18)




Afghani, Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, and other unaccompanied children transiting through the country, either legally or illegally, are vulnerable to trafficking for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (13; 8) During the reporting period, 41 migrant children were identified as potential victims of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. (8)

The government was unable to fully meet Roma children’s need for teaching in Romani due to a shortage of qualified teachers. (19; 18) Birth certification is sometimes required for attending school in Macedonia, and some Roma children had difficulty accessing education due to a lack of birth registration and identity cards. (12; 20; 7; 18) Classes for children with intellectual disabilities have disproportionately high enrollment rates of Roma children due to discrimination based, in part, on faulty screening procedures for assessing intellectual disabilities. (21; 22) Increased government funding for programs to eliminate barriers to education has increased school attendance rates among Roma children. (21; 23) Barriers remain, however, and increase Roma children’s vulnerability to child labor.

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Macedonia’s legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor, including the minimum age for work.

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 42 of the Constitution; Section 7 of the Labor Relations Act (24; 25)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 7, 63, and 66–67 of the Labor Relations Act (25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Rulebook on the Minimum Occupational Safety and Health Requirements for Young Workers (26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 11 of the Constitution; Articles 418, 418-c, and 418-d of the Criminal Code (24; 27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 418-c and 418-d of the Criminal Code (27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 190–193b of the Criminal Code (27)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 12 of the Law on Child Protection (28)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		Article 62 of the Law on Defense (29)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 62 of the Law on Defense (29)
Non-state	Yes		Articles 122, 322-a, and 404 of the Criminal Code (27)
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 (30; 31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 44 of the Constitution (24)

\* No conscription (29)

The law's minimum age protections do not apply to children who are self-employed or working outside formal employment relationships. (3; 25)

### 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 Policy (MLSP) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP)	Work with the police to seek out street children in need of assistance and track cases of forced child labor through the Department of Social Inclusion. (16; 32) Register complaints about hazardous child labor and investigate children's participation in street work through 30 Centers for Social Work (CSWs) and the Ombudsman's Office, which includes a special unit for the investigation of violations of child rights and refers complaints to the State Labor Inspectorate. (3; 5; 33; 7) When child labor is detected, the child is removed, put under the care of the CSW, and interviewed by a social worker. The child is then either returned to their family or taken to a safe house. (5) CSWs serve to counsel, educate, and assist victims of trafficking in persons. (7)
State Labor Inspectorate (SLI)	Enforce child labor laws and transmit cases of suspected criminal law violations to the Public Prosecutor. Inspectors conduct a minimum of 60 target and compliant-based cases per month. (32; 33)
Ministry of Interior (MOI)	Enforce 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. (33) With MLSP, formed mobile teams in previous years to identify street children and remove them from hazardous situations. Mobile teams increased their activities in mid-2017. (1; 3; 13; 19)
Public Prosecutor's Office	Prosecute criminal law violations, including those involving the worst forms of child labor. (34) Has an Organized Crime and Corruption Unit with four prosecutors dedicated to cases of child abuse and the worst forms of child labor. The Skopje Basic Prosecutor's Office has eight prosecutors for child abuse cases. (15; 35)
Office of the National Referral Mechanism	Refer potential cases of child victims of human trafficking to law enforcement authorities for investigation, and refer potential victims to social services. (16; 35)

When children are found in child labor, they are removed from the worksite and referred to the Centers for Social Work (CSWs). A functional referral mechanism exists, which enables authorities and social services to reciprocally refer children found in child labor. (7) During the reporting period and in early 2018, the MLSP and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) reestablished mobile teams for early detection and identification of vulnerable groups, including victims of trafficking, in Skopje, Bitola, Kumanovo, and Gevgelija. (8)

#### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Macedonia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MLSP that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including referral mechanisms.

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

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (36)	Unknown* (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	74 (36)	74 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	No (5)	Yes (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	16,671 (36)	16,459 (19)
Number Conducted at Worksites	16,671 (37)	16,459 (19)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (36)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	N/A	Unknown* (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (7)

\* The government does not publish this information.

Macedonia's State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) is responsible for enforcing all labor laws, including laws on child labor, in all sectors of the formal economy and can assess fines at any point of the inspection. (7) However, the inspectors are distributed disproportionately across the country, which causes uneven business inspections, with some being inspected more than others. While the SLI does not have a specific strategy for conducting inspections, unannounced inspections in all sectors are permitted, including legally-registered private farms. (7) Inspectors can also inspect private homes and farms with a valid warrant. (7)

During the reporting period, all labor inspectors received trainings on labor laws, including on child labor. The MLSP also trained 25 social workers and labor inspectors in trafficking among migrants and 50 labor inspectors were trained on trafficking for labor exploitation. (8) The MLSP reported that resources were adequate in 2017. (7) However, the capacity of all the institutions that enforce child labor remained weak. (7)

As in previous years, inspection results conducted by the MLSP were not shared among offices due to lack of a central database. (33) As a result, inspectors write reports without knowledge of findings in previous inspections. Labor inspection reports were not always shared within the SLI and between the SLI and the MLSP. (33; 7)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

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

**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	Yes (37)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (37)	N/A (23)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (13)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	13 (36)	Unknown (23)

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

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Number of Violations Found	6 (36)	2 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	13 (36)	3 (8)
Number of Convictions	0 (36)	0 (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (7)

In Macedonia, legal requirements mandate that public prosecutors receive a 30-month training on criminal deeds, including child labor. (9) Police investigators receive trainings yearly and when new legislation is passed. In 2017, investigators received training on child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, recruitment and use of children as child soldiers, and use of children in illicit activities. (7) In addition, 718 police officers received training on human trafficking within migrant situations, and 265 police officers received training on unaccompanied minors and potential foreign victims of human trafficking. (8)

In 2017, criminal investigators reported sufficient resources to adequately perform their investigations. (7) However, the Prosecutor's Office remains underfunded. Sources reported that for the first half of 2017, border agents were unable to properly identify victims of human trafficking and proper coordination was lacking. (19; 8) Nevertheless, coordination improved as of June, when the government appointed a new National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Coordinator. (19)

#### 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 the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination among government ministries and committees.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and 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 and by providing social services. (33; 7) Led by the MLSP. (5) Continued to work on the establishment of a task force that will include border police. (19)
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. Comprises representatives from civil society, WHO, and UNICEF country offices. (38; 7) Re-elected new members in 2017. (7)
National Commission for Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration (National Trafficking in Persons Commission)	Coordinate the work of all institutions involved in combating human trafficking. Led by the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Coordinator with 14 representatives from 9 governmental institutions. (33; 7) Includes the Sub-Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Children, which serves as an advisory body to the National Trafficking in Persons Commission on all forms of child trafficking. (1; 33; 39) Led by the MLSP. (5) Held four meetings in 2017. (8)

In 2017, intergovernmental coordination efforts related to child protection were put on hold due to political conflicts and government crisis. (7) Disagreements between the MLSP and the Deputy Minister, who was from a different political party, made it difficult for all of the coordinating bodies overseen by the MLSP to meet during the first half of 2017. (7) The National Trafficking in Persons Commission was reportedly underfunded and played a limited role in coordinating efforts among NGOs and local committees. (19) However, immediately after the government's adoption of the 2017–2020 National Strategy and National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration in March 2017, the National Trafficking in Persons Commission helped local committees draft their first action plans, with a special focus on trafficking in persons for labor exploitation. (19)

#### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementing a new national child labor action plan.

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

Policy	Description
National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration (2017–2020)†	Focuses on preventing human trafficking by reducing the vulnerability of at-risk populations, improves victim identification, and increases efforts to combat human trafficking for forced labor, including forced child begging. (7; 40; 8)
National Strategy for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010–2020)	Addresses social protection, social inclusion, health, education, and employment of children. (33) Aims to increase birth registration for Roma and other minorities, expand 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. (33; 41) The strategy was active in 2017 and the government adopted annual operational plans. (7)
National Action Plan for Education (2016–2020)	Aims to expand inclusive education and improve education for the Roma community. Seeks to increase the number of Roma students in preschools and elementary schools and decrease the number of Roma students in primary schools for children with special needs. (42) Active in 2017 and undertook activities, such as awarding scholarships to Roma students and hired 100 tutors to help Roma students in primary school. (19; 23)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the government adopted the National Strategy and National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration (2017–2020), but did not provide sufficient funding for its implementation. (8)

In addition, the Action Plan for Children on the Streets (2013–2015), the National Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Abuse and Neglect of Children (2013–2015), and the National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child (2012–2015) aimed to eliminate child labor and protect children. However, they all expired in 2015 and no new plans have been adopted to directly address child labor during the reporting period. (7)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, 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 and adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

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

Program	Description
MLSP Day Centers, Shelter, and Social Worker Trainings†	Operates two day centers that can accommodate 60 children and partially funds two other centers, operated by NGOs, that can accommodate 80 children. (5; 43; 7) Supports a street children transit center. (43) In 2017, provided services to 17 children at the day centers. (7) Runs an ongoing program to instruct foster families on how to accommodate child trafficking victims. (5) Provides counseling, education, and assistance with registration documents to street children and child human trafficking victims at 30 CSW facilities. (14; 33)
Hotlines*	NGO Open Gate/La Strada operates a human trafficking hotline with seven operators. (36) NGO Megjashi runs an SOS hotline to report cases of child labor and abuse. (36) In 2017, two complaint lines† were opened, one by NGO Megjashi and another by the MLSP, which receives child labor, street children, human trafficking, and child abuse complaints. (7)
Center for Victims of Human Trafficking and Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking†	The MLSP operates the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking shelter, that provides housing, basic services, and reintegration services to victims. (1; 44; 7) The MOI supports the Transit Center for Foreign Victims of Trafficking, operated by NGOs. (44; 7) In 2017, one minor girl was referred to the Center. (19)
UNICEF Projects	UNICEF projects partner with the government and NGOs to provide child protection, detection and referral of child victims of violence, and educational integration of vulnerable children, including Roma and migrant children. (5; 45; 46) These projects include the Program for the Protection of Children Against Violence (2016–2020) and the UNICEF Country Program (2016–2020). (5; 45; 46)
Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education†	MLSP project implemented in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund and 19 government units. Part of the 2014–2020 Roma Strategy. (19; 47) Aims to support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in preschool. (5; 7) MLSP, MOI, and Ministry of Justice are all part of the project work plan. (36)
Educational Seminars for Roma Students and Teachers	Ministry of Education, social workers, and NGOs provided educational seminars in 2017 to several local Roma NGOs, students, and teachers. Children in the seminars were instructed on the risks associated with forced marriages of minors. (7)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Macedonia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (7; 8)



The quality of services offered by the programs likely would improve if donors provided additional funding. (7) In addition, programs funded by donors typically were not continued by the government after funding expired. (1; 5; 13) A source reported that funding decreased for victim assistance in shelters, and the only shelter for human trafficking victims was not fully functional during the reporting period. (8) Also, day centers have not reduced the number of children on the streets, especially among Roma ethnicity, or child begging, suggesting that existing programs were insufficient in combating child labor. (5; 13; 36; 7; 23)

## 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 Macedonia (Table 11).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that labor law protections apply to all children, including self-employed children and children working outside formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2017
Enforcement	Publish information on labor law enforcement, including SLI's funding amount.	2015 – 2017
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted throughout the country to promote compliance with child labor laws in all geographical regions.	2017
	Strengthen the capacity of institutions so that labor inspectors can conduct thorough child labor inspections.	2017
	Provide labor inspectors with an electronic system to record and share data on inspections, including the number of inspections, the number of violations found, and the number of citations issued by the SLI and the MLSP, and the entity receiving the citation, and publish the information.	2009 – 2017
	Provide sufficient funding to the Prosecutor's Office.	2013 – 2017
	Ensure law enforcement agencies proactively identify child trafficking victims and border agents coordinate to properly identify victims of human trafficking.	2015 – 2017
Coordination	Increase funding for the National Commission for Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration and ensure that it coordinates with NGOs.	2017
Government Policies	Provide sufficient funding to implement the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration.	2014 – 2017
	Create and implement a National Action Plan on Child Labor.	2017
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children engaged in child labor, including those in street work and those subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.	2013 – 2017
	Reduce barriers to education by increasing the number of teachers who can provide education in the Romani language and eliminate placing children in schools for children with intellectual disabilities on the basis of ethnicity. Make additional efforts to register Roma children at birth.	2014 – 2017
	Increase funding dedicated to combating child trafficking, and ensure that child trafficking victims receive assistance that addresses their specific needs, including shelters.	2015 – 2017

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