

In 2012, Macedonia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Macedonia adopted a rulebook on the minimum occupational safety and health requirements for workers younger than 18 years, continued to implement projects to assist street children and children from the Roma communities, opened a toll-free hotline for street children and victims of sexual abuse, and trained social workers to address trafficking. However, the Government does not have a national system to record labor inspections and make the data publicly available, and Government programs are not of sufficient scope to cover the majority of children being trafficked or working on the streets. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and child trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	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		92.3

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2009 published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3, 2005.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Macedonia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly as victims of domestic and international trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging on the streets.(3-6) Macedonian victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation tended to be minors between the ages of 12 and 18. Women and young girls were subjected to conditions of forced labor and sex trafficking in Macedonia's bars and nightclubs.(5)

Children in Macedonia, primarily ethnic Roma, are forced to beg and sell cigarettes and other small items in open markets, in the streets, and to patrons of bars and restaurants.(4-11) The ILO notes that the majority of children engaged in child labor did so on an unpaid basis.(12)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Constitution and the Labor Relations Act set the minimum working age at 15.(6, 13-15) Children who are 14 years of age are allowed to work as apprentices or as part of an official educational program.(6, 13, 14, 16) In October 2012, the Minister of Labor and Social Policy, with the consent of the Minister of Health, adopted a Rulebook on the minimum occupational safety and health requirements for workers younger than 18 years of age.(17) The Rulebook covers the general provisions for the protection of workers and prescribes the limit values of exposure to the harmful effects of physical, chemical, and biological agents in the workplace, and the list of harmful factors and working conditions to which young workers should not be exposed.(17)

Forced labor is prohibited by Article 11 of the Constitution.(13, 14) Trafficking of children is specifically prohibited and can be prosecuted under Article 418 of the Criminal Code.(4, 5, 18) In the case of foreign child victims of trafficking, the Law on Foreigners allows them two months of temporary residence to determine whether they wish to assist the authorities with prosecutions. This period can be extended several times, conditioned upon collaboration with the authorities during criminal proceedings.(4, 5)

The minimum age for voluntary military service is age 18, and there is no compulsory military service.(19) The Criminal Code bans prostitution and procuring people for prostitution, in addition to forced labor, slavery, and transporting of people into slavery.(4, 5, 18) The Law on the Protection of Children

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forbids prostitution, including any type of sexual use or abuse of children. In addition, Article 201 of the Criminal Code states that it is illegal for parents or guardians to coerce children into forced prostitution for their own interest.(18)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

While begging itself is not illegal in Macedonia, the use of children for forced organized and exploitative begging is prohibited under Article 201 of the Criminal Code.(18)

Education in Macedonia is free and compulsory to age 15, which is also the minimum age that children can start working in Macedonia.(14, 20) Roma children sometimes experience discriminatory treatment in schools, and primary level enrollment and completion rates remain low for this group.(8, 11) School dropout rates are significantly higher among Roma children.(9)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Children is a coordinating body composed of representatives from government agencies.(5, 16) The Commission's responsibilities include protection against child labor; however, the main focus of the group is social services and other ways to protect children's rights.(16) The National Commission for

Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration coordinates the work of all institutions involved in the prevention, protection, and prosecution of trafficking in humans. This National Commission is chaired by the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator who has the status of counselor of State.(16, 21) The National Commission for Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration meets six times a year to draft policies and strategies, monitor their implementation, report on them, and recommend activities. The Commission has a subgroup which addresses child victims of trafficking.(21)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Ombudsman's Office, the Prosecutor's Office, the Courts, and Social Care Centers are the agencies responsible for enforcing laws regarding hazardous and forced child labor.(6, 16) There are 110 labor inspectors who are responsible for all labor violations, including child labor.(6, 10) In regional offices where there is only one inspector, he or she may cover all labor violations without having been trained on occupational safety and health standards for children.(22, 23) Occupational safety and health and labor relations inspectors are mandated to carry out at least 60 inspections per month and at least one inspection per year for businesses within the following sectors: industrial, agriculture, trade, construction, forestry, transport, communal services, craft trade, hotel and restaurants, schools and universities, workshops, and laboratories used for professional practice.(23) Inspections for all other premises are required once every 3 years.(22, 23) The ILO Committee of Experts has encouraged the Government to expand the reach and strengthen the capacity of the labor inspection services to better monitor work performed by children in the informal sector.(12)

The data and results of the MLSP inspections are not shared between the regional offices and are not publicly available.(23) The Office of the Ombudsman is available to receive complaints of hazardous and forced child labor.(6) The Ombudsman's Office reported that there were no official complaints of child labor in 2012.(6)

The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) special police unit is responsible for investigating crimes involving child trafficking, use of children in illicit activities, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced begging.(6) The police unit has 19 officers dedicated to organized crime, corruption and trafficking. Five of these officers are specifically designated to investigate cases involving the trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation.(6, 16) According to

data available to the Office of National Referral Mechanism, eight victims of human trafficking were identified in 2012. Four of these victims were minors.(17) In 2012, five children were found to be victims of child trafficking.(6) All children found to be victims of child trafficking were removed from the situation, placed in shelters for trafficked children, and given immediate medical and psychological care.(6)

In 2012, police charged a total of 33 people with trafficking in persons offenses.(5) The Prosecution Office obtained convictions against 20 defendants in four trafficking cases. Sentences for these convictions ranged from nine months to ten years.(5) Information was unavailable regarding whether any of the victims were children.

The Government continued to implement police directives, which jointly include one plainclothes police officer and one social worker reaching out to street children and engaging their families in order to encourage other lifestyles, including school attendance.(6) Research indicates that government efforts to eliminate forced begging by children have been ineffective. The necessary laws were in place, but they were rarely implemented by officials.(10, 11)

In October 2012, the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator participated in a conference for southeastern European countries to coordinate national activities for combating trafficking and establish more efficient regional cooperation.(5) Social workers and Directors of the Centers for Social Work (CSW) received specialized antitrafficking training on the role of the CSW in dealing with trafficking cases. Social workers working on mobile teams completed antitrafficking courses, and general training for social workers covered how to identify victims of labor exploitation.(5)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The MLSP adopted a 10-year National Strategy in 2010 for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The strategy addresses children's rights including social protection, social inclusion, health, education, and employment.(6, 16) The question of whether this policy has an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

The National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration drafted the new National Strategy and the 2013-2016 National Action Plan (NAP). The plan was adopted by the Government of Macedonia in October, 2012.(5) The third consecutive NAP sets the country's

priorities and serves as a tool for increasing Macedonia's ability to combat trafficking.(5) It coordinates procedures with neighboring countries and puts forth new approaches to reduce the vulnerability of risk groups and potential victims. The plan covers prevention and focuses on early detection of both victims and traffickers. It also calls for the establishment of local anti-trafficking committees and mobile teams.(5) The National Rapporteur on Trafficking and Smuggling published its fourth annual report in February 2013, providing a comprehensive assessment of trafficking in persons activities during 2012.(5)

The Government has a 10-year National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child (2006-2015), which outlines activities for prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labor. The National Action Plan includes direct assistance and intervention for withdrawal from child labor, rehabilitation of victims, and provisions for better access to primary education.(8, 16) The implementation of the National Plan of Action has been slow, however, with no specific funds being earmarked for implementation, including the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan.(8, 9) An Action Plan for Children on the Streets 2013-2015 is currently being developed in order to provide a systemic and holistic response to the issue of children on the streets. (17). The plan includes an emphasis on social services, health care, and inclusion in the educational system. It is anticipated that the Action Plan will be adopted in the first quarter of 2013.(17)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, with international support, continues to operate five Drop-In Centers responsible for rendering social services to children working in the streets, including street children who beg.(11, 16, 24) A team of inspectors search for these children to persuade them to go to the centers or back to school. A free-of-charge SOS phone line was opened to report a child on the street or a child victim of sexual abuse.(17)

The ILO Committee of Experts noted that the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in cooperation with UNICEF, is implementing a project for improved social protection for street children entitled, "Children-at-risk; Breaking the Cycle of Social Exclusion of Children in Macedonia." This project aims to develop services and programs for children who live and work on the street, as well as for their families.(9) The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in cooperation

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with the Roma Education Fund and 19 government units, continued to implement the “Inclusion of Roma Children in Pre-School Education” project. This project implements some of the measures and activities included in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia.(11, 25) The main goal of the project is to improve and support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in preschool.(25)

The Government fully funds the operation of a shelter for domestic trafficking victims. In 2012, the Government allocated federal funding for five NGOs to conduct preventive antitrafficking activities and to provide services to victims of trafficking.(5) The Center for victims of human trafficking assisted a total of 12 people in 2012. Ten of these victims were minors.(17) The victims received emotional and medical support, in addition to legal aid. Efforts for their social inclusion were made in cooperation with NGOs and the social workers from the CSW.(17) The CSW also provide reintegration services for domestic victims of trafficking. However, they cannot accommodate all victims seeking services

in a 24-hour period. There is no facility that is specifically dedicated to children. Children and adults are housed in the same facilities.(21)

In Gostivar, Bitola, and Kumanovo, social workers from the CSW and representatives of NGOs work in the field to detect human trafficking victims and vulnerable groups.(17) In addition, the teams work to find and propose possible solutions to address the needs of vulnerable groups, provide help and support to identified trafficking victims and their families, and implement programs for reintegration.(17)

The Government runs a Reception Center for foreign victims of trafficking. Additional services at the Reception Center are provided by an NGO receiving funds from the Government.(21) The Reception Center has no facilities dedicated exclusively to children and they do not have the capacity to handle male victims or any victims under 12 years of age.(21)

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Macedonia:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Expand the reach and strengthen the capacity of labor inspection services to better monitor work performed by children in the informal sector.	2012
	Provide the inspectors of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with a nationally accessible system to record inspections and make data publicly available.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Government Policies	Provide sufficient funding to implement the National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child (2006-2015)	2012
Social Programs	Expand programs to address the economic and education factors behind forced, organized, and exploitative begging, particularly within the Roma community.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Increase the capacity of the Reception Center and the Centers for Social Welfare to reach more child victims of trafficking and forced labor, adapting the services of these shelters to the unique needs of child victims, including separate spaces for children.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

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