

*In 2011, Albania made a minimal advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted a law that provides reintegration assistance for trafficking victims and introduced a child allowance for families already benefiting from economic aid through Albania's Law on Social Assistance and Services. However, research suggests that payments to eligible families are too low to have a positive impact on children. In addition, the Government relies on poorly funded NGOs to provide the bulk of services to children engaged in the worst forms of child labor. Furthermore, Albania failed to endorse the National Strategy for Children, which in turn stalled implementation of the Albanian Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 as planned. Children continue to be exploited in the worst forms of child labor in street work and forced begging.*

#### Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	7-14 yrs.	19.0 (108,161)
Attending School	7-14 yrs.	91.0
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	20.5
Primary Completion Rate		86.3

#### Sources:

**Primary completion rate:** Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

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

#### Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Albania are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, specifically in street work and forced begging.(3-5) Street children work as vendors, vehicle washers and shoe-shiners, as well as drug runners.(6) Adults exploit children, some reportedly as young as 4 and 5 years old, forcing them to beg and requiring them to be on the streets and go door to door.(6-10) Some children may work long hours, often late into the night.(11) Children working on the streets may be exposed to many dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.(12)



Children in Albania are reportedly employed in the textile, garment and footwear industries. Some are employed directly in factories, where they are exposed to heavy machinery and chemicals; however, the majority work in home-based operations, where they work long hours.(4, 6, 13)

Children also work in the agricultural sector and in mines, where they are exposed to inhaling chemicals, carrying heavy loads and suffering injuries from tools.(4, 6, 14) Children work in the construction sector and use dangerous equipment that exposes them to risk of injuries. There is evidence that children suffer from exhaustion caused by long working hours in the construction and service sectors.(6, 15)

Albania is primarily a country of origin for children trafficked abroad to Greece, Macedonia and Kosovo.(10, 16) In addition, children are trafficked within Albania to large cities, tourist sites, border points and ports.(10) Both boys and girls are trafficked for illicit activities and forced labor, including forced begging. Girls are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 17-19)

Research indicates that ethnic minority children from the Roma and Egyptian communities make up the majority of street children and trafficking victims.(4, 10, 20) Traditionally, these communities have suffered from pervasive marginalization and discrimination, which contribute to their acute poverty and difficulty in accessing social services.(10, 20)

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Albanian Labor Code establishes the minimum age for work at 16.(21) Children between the ages of 14 and 16 can be employed during school holidays, provided that the employment does not harm their health and development.(21, 22) However, the law fails to define what constitutes permissible school holiday work, or the number of hours or conditions that would render employment acceptable.(22)

	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	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

Children ages 16 and 17 can work, but are restricted from work performed at night or work deemed harmful to their health or growth and can only be employed in what the Council of Ministers defines as “easy jobs.”(21) The Council of Ministers sets certain rules for the maximum duration and conditions of these jobs, which include employment that does not affect the children’s health and growth.(21, 23) The Labor Code sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 and lists jobs considered hazardous for younger children.(21) In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health at Work Law prohibits children from work that exposes them to toxic agents and radiation; work conditions that push them beyond their physical or psychological capacity; and work that exposes them to extreme heat or cold, noise or vibration.(23)

The safeguards for children in the Labor Code do not apply to “family jobs carried out by family members” who share the

same household.(21) This exemption fails to protect children who work with family members from dangerous forms of child labor. The Labor Code is only applicable to contract employment; however, many working children, such as self-employed workers, are not covered by a contract.(22)

The Labor Code prohibits forced or compulsory labor by any person, except in special circumstances, such as military service.(21) The minimum age for voluntary military service is 18, and 19 for compulsory recruitment.(24)

Albania’s Criminal Code criminalizes the trafficking of children and imposes a prison sentence for offenders. In addition, the Code prohibits the exploitation of children for prostitution; the use of minors for the production, distribution or publication of pornographic materials; the forced begging of children; and inciting minors into criminal activity.(3, 25, 26)

During the reporting period, the Government of Albania adopted a law that provides reintegration assistance and stipends to victims of trafficking once they depart from shelters.(16)

Albania provides 9 years of free and compulsory education; however, the costs of school supplies and classroom resources are prohibitive for many families.(4) Children generally start school at the age of 6, making education compulsory until the age of 15. Research indicates that marginalized groups, namely the Roma community, are often excluded from the Albanian education system.(17) The lack of civil registration and the lost income from leaving work serve as barriers to children’s participation in school.(27)

Albania’s Law for Protection of Children (LPC), adopted in 2010, stipulates that children have the right to protection from all forms of violence and economic exploitation.(28-30) The country’s Law on Social Assistance and Services was amended over the reporting period, to expand the number of those eligible for economic aid.(31)

## Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The LPC institutes mechanisms for collaboration among central authorities, local authorities and human rights civil society organizations.(28) Under the LPC, regional governments are mandated to implement provisions of the law, including monitoring the situation of high-risk children and families, coordinating protection and referral activities at the local level, and identifying and managing individual cases.(29, 32) At the municipal level, child protection units

(CPUs)—currently located in 29 municipal and community levels across Albania—are tasked with the identification of children in danger and their subsequent referral to a safe environment.(15) The LPC established the National Council for the Protection of the Rights of Children (NCPRC), which is the primary government body responsible for the coordination of the protection of children’s rights, including children involved in child labor.(15)

The NCPRC and the Labor Inspectorate State Social Service, which are both under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLSA), as well as the Albanian State Police, are responsible for the enforcement of laws related to hazardous child labor.(15) The Labor Inspectorate has 170 inspectors charged to inspect for violations of all labor laws, including those on child labor, at the national and regional levels.(15) The Government maintains that the quality of inspections is compromised by the lack of funds for adequate office space and transportation.(15)

During the first 6 months of the reporting period inspectors carried out 20 inspections per month on all labor issues, of which only three involved unlawful child labor within licensed businesses.(15) Information about the subsequent actions taken on these cases and any penalties that ensued was not available.

The Office of the National Coordinator for the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings (NCAT), headed by a Deputy Minister of the Interior, is responsible for coordinating all anti-trafficking efforts in Albania.(19, 32) This office publishes a report on the state of human trafficking in Albania twice a year.(19) During the reporting period, the Government continued to fund a national toll-free, 24-hour hotline for potential victims of trafficking, which includes victims of forced child begging.(16) The Ministry of Interior’s General Directorate of Police is responsible for enforcing all laws, including child labor and child trafficking laws at the local and regional levels. The Serious Crimes Prosecution Office (SCPO) has nationwide jurisdiction over all trafficking cases.(19) Research was unable to determine the number of child trafficking violations, citations or penalties.

The National Referral Mechanisms (NRM) is a collaborative mechanism through which government and civil society organizations coordinate the identification, protection, referral and rehabilitation of trafficking victims.(32, 33) The NRM suffers from a lack of coordination, communication and effective implementation among its signatories.(19, 34)

## Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Strategy for Children (2011-2015) serves as the primary policy document to guide the protection and monitoring of children’s rights, as called for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.(15) The National Strategy plans on addressing the worst forms of child labor by leading the implementation of the Albanian Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 (ARCL).(35) However, as of the writing of this report, the National Strategy for Children still has not been endorsed by the Council of Ministers.(15)

The ARCL, approved by the MLSA in 2010, outlines a plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Albania by 2016.(28) The plan includes the adoption and implementation of effective legislation and law enforcement to address the worst forms of child labor; the provision of free, quality education for all children; the provision of social protection to families and children in need; and the implementation of labor market policies that promote youth employment and the regulation and formalization of the informal economy.(35) The Government of Albania has presented the Roadmap to stakeholders throughout the country, who have in turn begun drafting regional action plans with local stakeholders.(15) However, research suggests that the ARCL will only become operational once the National Strategy for Children is endorsed.(35) Research was unable to determine if the ARCL will be mainstreamed into a different strategy, if the National Strategy for Children fails to be endorsed.

During the reporting period, the Government approved a 2011-2013 National Anti-trafficking Strategy with input from NGOs.(16)

The National Strategy for Social Inclusion (2007-2013) proposes to reduce poverty among Albania’s vulnerable groups, including children and Roma communities.(36) The strategy promotes an increase in formal labor market participation, the inclusion of policies that involve vulnerable children in education and training, and the formation of modern social protection systems.(15, 36) The Government of Albania continued to implement the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (DRI) (2005-2015) in Albania, which strives to improve access to and the quality of social services for Roma communities.(37) The question of whether these policies have had an impact on child labor does not appear to have been addressed.

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

Over the reporting period, the Developing a Child Protection Safety Net (Safety Net) Program (2009-2012), implemented by the MLSA, UNICEF and *Terre des Hommes*, began to implement the LPC's child protection framework, which includes measures to protect vulnerable children and child victims of trafficking from work exploitation.(30, 38) The Safety Net Program is implemented through CPUs at the local level.(30) The CPUs employ specially trained child protection workers to identify exploited children and children at risk, to coordinate and deliver child protection services, and to promote children's rights among their communities.(30, 39)

The Government of Albania and the UNDP continue to implement the Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania (2010-2013) Program, which addresses social exclusion issues in the Roma and Egyptian communities.(40) Over the reporting period, the Program reportedly helped strengthen institutional capacities of employment centers and vocational training centers to increase access to the Roma and Egyptian communities; it has also promoted primary education for Roma and Egyptian children who lack access to early learning.(40) However, given the scope of the problem, these efforts appear insufficient.

With technical support from ILO-IPEC/SIMPOC, and financial support from USDOL, the Government's National Institute of Statistics conducted a Child Labor Survey and developed a database on child labor during the last reporting period. However, the release of the publication has been delayed.(15) Until the report is released, policies and programs

to assist child laborers will continue to suffer from a lack of information on current scope of the child labor situation in Albania.

The Government continues to fund and operate a reception center that houses victims of trafficking identified in Albania.(16) Over the reporting period, the State Police began to implement a plan to prevent juveniles engaged in hazardous work or begging from becoming victims of trafficking, maltreatment, sexual exploitation and coercion.(31)

In March 2011, a child allowance was introduced for families already benefiting from economic aid through Albania's Law on Social Assistance and Services.(31) However, payments to eligible families are still deemed too low to have a positive impact on children.(31)

Social services for children engaged in the worst forms of child labor are generally provided by poorly funded civil society organizations, rather than government organizations. These civil society organizations often lack well-trained staff or coordination with other protection services, especially at the local level.(15, 41)

Child protection stakeholders, including officials from the local and central government and civil society, met towards the end of the reporting period to discuss existing legal and social service gaps, and to promote the mainstreaming of policies and program implementation for children living and working on the streets.(41) The stakeholders acknowledged that child protection mechanisms nationwide need to be improved.(39) In addition, they found that there is a knowledge gap at the national level on the prevalence of street children and the reasons why these children live and work in the streets.(41)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Amend legislation to define permissible work, including hours and conditions thereof, for children between the ages of 14 and 16 years.	2011
	Amend legislation to protect children working with their families from the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011
	Amend the Labor Code to include children who fall outside contract work, such as street children.	2009, 2010, 2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Provide inspectors with the tools needed to effectively carry out their tasks, such as transportation and office facilities.	2010, 2011
	Strengthen coordination, communication and implementation of the NRM to enhance victim protection services.	2010, 2011

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Coordination and Enforcement	Disaggregate, publish and disseminate statistics, including the number of citations and prosecutions, on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking.	2010, 2011
Policies	Endorse and implement the National Strategy for Children.	2011
	Fully realize the Albanian National Roadmap on Child Labor.	2011
	Assess the impact that existing policies to promote social inclusion may have on addressing child labor.	2011
Social Programs	Build the capacity and knowledge and increase the resources of child protection service implementers at the national and local levels.	2010, 2011
	Conduct national research on the incidence of street children and the factors that cause them to live and work on the streets.	2011
	Increase resources and the number of social services available to children, including Roma and Egyptian children, engaged in or at risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor.	2011
	Release the Child Labor Survey Report to the public.	2011
	Increase payments to families eligible for assistance under the Social Assistance and Services Law.	2011

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