

In 2012, Albania made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Council of Ministers adopted an Action Plan for Children. The Government amended and improved the National Referral Mechanism to increase cooperation between government agencies and civil society on trafficking issues. The Government also released a national Child Labor Survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2010. Despite these efforts, the Government relies on poorly funded NGOs to provide the bulk of services to children engaged in the worst forms of child labor. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, particularly in forced begging.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	19.0 (108,161)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	91.0
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	20.5
Primary Completion Rate		88.8

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(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, particularly in forced begging.(3-6) Adults exploit children, some reportedly as young as ages 4 and 5, forcing them to beg and requiring them to be on the streets and go door-to-door.(7-11) Reportedly, children in Albania who beg may work long hours, often late into the night. In addition, these children may be physically beaten and are at risk of sexual exploitation.(12) The Government has identified street work as a worst form of child labor.(13) Children work on the streets, including as drug runners.(7)

Although evidence is limited, there are reports that children in Albania work in the textile, garment, and footwear sectors. Some are reportedly employed directly in factories, in which they are exposed to heavy machinery and chemicals; however, the majority work long hours in home-based operations.(4, 6, 7, 14)



Children work in mines; where they are exposed to chemicals and carry heavy loads.(4, 7, 15) Children are also engaged in dangerous activities in agriculture. Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(16, 17) Children work in the construction sector and use dangerous equipment that exposes them to the risk of injuries. There is evidence that children suffer from exhaustion caused by long working hours in the construction and service sectors.(7, 18)

Albania is primarily a country of origin for children trafficked abroad to Greece, Macedonia, and Kosovo.(9, 19) In addition, children are trafficked within Albania to large cities, tourist sites, border points, and ports.(9) Children are primarily trafficked for illicit activities and forced labor, including forced begging. Some girls are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 6, 20-23)

Research indicates that ethnic minority children from the Roma and Egyptian communities make up the majority of street children and trafficking victims.(4, 9) Traditionally, these communities have suffered from pervasive marginalization and discrimination, which contribute to their acute poverty and difficulty in accessing social services.(9, 24)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Albanian Labor Code establishes the minimum age for work at 16.(6, 25) Children between the ages of 14 and 16

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may be employed part-time during school holidays, provided that the employment does not harm their health and development.(6, 25, 26) However, the law fails to define what constitutes permissible school holiday work, or the number of hours or conditions that would render employment acceptable.(26)

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

Children ages 16 and 17 may work, but are restricted from work performed at night or work deemed harmful to their health or growth, and may only be employed in what the Council of Ministers defines as “easy jobs.”(25) 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.(25, 27) The Labor Code sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 and lists jobs considered hazardous for younger children.(25) 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.(27)

The protections for children in the Labor Code do not apply to “family jobs carried out by family members” who share the same household, leaving unprotected those children performing

hazardous work who work with family members.(25) The Labor Code is also only applicable to contract employment, leaving the many working children not covered by a contract, including self-employed children, unprotected.(26)

The Labor Code prohibits compulsory labor by any person, except in special circumstances, such as military service.(25) The minimum age is 18 for voluntary military service and 19 for compulsory recruitment.(6, 28)

Albania’s Criminal Code criminalizes the trafficking of children and imposes a prison sentence for offenders. In addition, the Criminal 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, 6, 29, 30) The law provides reintegration assistance and stipends to victims of trafficking once they depart from shelters.(19) During the reporting period, the Government amended the code to include imprisonment and monetary penalties as punishment for “offering remuneration in exchange for personal profit from prostitution.”(23)

In 2012, the Government signed an Additional Cooperation Protocol with Kosovo to improve efforts to assist victims of trafficking, especially child victims.(23) In addition, the Ministry of Justice proposed changes to the Penal Code to protect victims of trafficking from being prosecuted as criminals, but the changes have not been approved by Parliament.(23)

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 due to a lack of civil registration or due to their families’ inability to forgo the lost income from the child leaving work.(7, 31)

Albania’s Law for Protection of Children (LPC) stipulates that children have the right to protection from all forms of violence and economic exploitation.(32-34)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The LPC institutes mechanisms for collaboration among central authorities, local authorities, and human rights civil society organizations.(32) 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.(6, 33, 35) At the municipal level, child protection units (CPUs) are tasked with the identification of children in danger and their subsequent referral to a safe environment.(18) During the reporting period, 100 new CPUs were created in municipal and community levels across Albania.(23) The National Council for the Protection of the Rights of Children (NCPRC) is the primary government body responsible for the coordination of the protection of children's rights, including children involved in child labor.(18)

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a collaborative mechanism through which government and civil society organizations coordinate the identification, protection, referral, and rehabilitation of trafficking victims.(6, 35) In April 2012, the Government amended the NRM to increase cooperation between government agencies and civil society in identifying, assisting, and reintegrating trafficking victims.(23) However, the new NRM did not first meet until March 21, 2013, and some ministries did not send representatives. It remains to be seen if these new changes are indeed increasing cooperation.(36)

In June 2012, the Council of Ministers issued a series of orders, Decisions 264-267, to improve coordination mechanisms for child referral cases and build local capacity for intervention where children are at risk.(6)

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.(18) The Labor Inspectorate has 145 inspectors, which is an increase from 100 inspectors at the end of 2011. Inspectors are charged with identifying violations of labor laws, including child labor laws.(23) However, the quality of inspections is compromised by the lack of funds for adequate office space and transportation. In addition, according to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Children, lack of training limits the ability of inspectors to detect the worst forms of child labor.(6, 18) In 2012, according to the Government, the Labor Inspectorate cited 300 cases of child labor violations. However, the Government reported only three children were removed or assisted as a result of the inspections, and no penalties were applied in any of the cases.(6)

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.(22, 35) This office is required to publish a report on the state of human trafficking in Albania twice a year.(22) In 2012, the NCAT did not publish the report.(23) In 2012, the NCAT conducted trainings to strengthen local government officials' ability to identify and assist potential victims of trafficking. The NCAT updated its anti-trafficking database to improve its ability to track and analyze trends in trafficking.(23) In addition, the NCAT trained 245 school directors and teachers in mostly rural areas to increase their trafficking awareness. The NCAT continued to support a national campaign against the exploitation of children, including a series of anti-trafficking television ads.(23)

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 has nationwide jurisdiction over all trafficking cases.(22) During the reporting period, the Government supported two NGOs in the training of 145 judges, prosecutors, and police officers on anti-trafficking issues. Also in 2012, three criminal cases of trafficking minors were reportedly prosecuted.(23) Research was unable to determine the result of these proceedings.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the reporting period, the Council of Ministers adopted an Action Plan for Children (2012-2015). The plan builds on recommendations from the Strategy Evaluation for Children (2005-2010) and the European Strategy for Children (2012-2015).(6, 37) Research was unable to determine if there is a relationship between the Action Plan and the Albanian Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 (ARCL). The ARCL outlines a plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Albania by 2016.(32) 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.(38) The Government continued to implement the 2011-2013 National Anti-trafficking Strategy.(6, 19) Research was unable to uncover any information about the strategy.

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In 2013, the Government supported the release of a national Child Labor Survey that was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2010. The report provides information on the scope of the child labor situation in Albania.(39)

The Government continued to implement the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007 to 2013 (NSDI). The NSDI specifically addresses the worst forms of child labor.(6) The plan calls for enforcing compulsory education and creating vocational training opportunities for vulnerable children as a key strategy to prevent and reduce child labor.(6)

The National Strategy for Social Inclusion (2007-2013) seeks to reduce poverty among Albania's vulnerable groups, including children and Roma communities.(40) 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.(18, 40) However, limited progress was made toward achieving these goals, in part due to limited funds and resources at the local level.(24) The Government of Albania continued to implement the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) in Albania, which strives to improve access to and the quality of social services for Roma communities.(41) 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*, continued to implement the LPC's child protection framework, which includes measures to protect vulnerable children and child victims of trafficking.(34) The Safety Net Program was implemented through CPUs at the local level.(34) 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.(34, 42)

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.(43) The program reportedly helped strengthen institutional capacities of employment centers and vocational training centers to increase access to the Roma and Egyptian communities; it also promoted primary education for Roma and Egyptian children who lack access to early learning.(43)

The Government supported the Zero Dropouts Program (2009-2013), which works to reduce school dropout rates among the Roma and Egyptian communities. The program's Second Chance Project works to reintegrate children who have dropped out of school.(44)

The Government continues to fund and operate a reception center that houses victims of trafficking identified in Albania.(19, 23) In 2011, 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.(45) Research did not find information regarding progress in implementing the plan.

In March 2011, a child allowance was introduced for families already benefiting from economic aid through Albania's Law on Social Assistance and Services. However, payments to eligible families are still deemed too low to have an impact on children.(45) Social services for children engaged in the worst forms of child labor are generally provided by 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.(18, 24, 46)

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, 2012
	Amend legislation to protect children working with their families from the worst forms of child labor.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Amend the Labor Code to include children who fall outside contract work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Provide inspectors with adequate training and the tools needed to carry out their tasks effectively.	2010, 2011, 2012
	Publish information on the results of criminal proceedings related to trafficking.	2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Conduct research on children engaged in dangerous work on the street in order to inform policy and program design.	2012
	Implement the National Action Plan for Children.	2011, 2012
	Assess the impact that existing policies to promote social inclusion may have on addressing child labor.	2011, 2012
	Fully implement the National Strategy for Social Inclusion (2007-2013), including sufficient financial resources at the local level.	2012
Social Programs	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, 2012
	Increase payments to families eligible for assistance under the Social Assistance and Services Law.	2011, 2012

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