

In 2022, Kosovo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted the Law on Crime Victim Compensation, which expands the existing victims' compensation program and assists child victims of human trafficking and forced labor. Additionally, it adopted the Strategy for Advancement of the Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022–2024 that includes a focus on providing inclusive education for children from these communities. The government also worked with Save the Children to develop manuals for social services providers, which resulted in improved communications between providers when assisting vulnerable children. 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 begging and loading and transporting goods. The Labor Inspectorate and Centers for Social Work face financial and human resource constraints, which may impede their ability to adequately address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

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	9.0 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	11.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–2020. (2)

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 agricultural machinery† (3-6)
	Forestry, including operating machinery and transporting wood (4,7)
Industry	Mining, including underground extraction of coal by hand† (4-6)
	Construction and manufacturing, including operation of tools in hazardous worksites† (4,6,7)
Services	Street work,† including vending small items,† manual transport of goods,† and begging† (4-7)
	Garbage scavenging at dumpsites† (5,6,8,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (3,5,6,10,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5-7,10)
	Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5,6,12)

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

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

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Kosovo is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. (4,7,13) Children are also sometimes forced to work in massage parlors by organized criminal groups. (13-15) In addition, Kosovan children and children from neighboring countries, especially Albania, are 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. (7,10,11,13-21) Economically vulnerable Kosovan children also sometimes work in construction and agriculture to support their families. (7,13,22,23)

Children from minority ethnic communities, especially girls, sometimes experience difficulty accessing education, in part due to a lack of native-language educational materials and insufficient subsidized transportation for rural children. In addition, according to national standards on education, children should not be excluded from schooling due to a lack of birth documentation, but some undocumented child laborers encountered challenges to school enrollment. (13) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (24)

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. (30) Despite Kosovo's unique status, the country worked with the UN through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025), which was implemented by the UN Kosovo Team and focused on promoting international standards and human rights. (31)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 7 of the Law on Labor (30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 20, 23, 26, 27, and 45 of the Law on Labor (30)
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 (30-32)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1 and 6 of the Law on Labor; Articles 163 and 165 of the Criminal Code; Articles 1 and 5 of the Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking (27,30,31)
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 (33-35)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 232 and 234 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47 and 62 of the Law on Child Protection (34,36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 267-273 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Law on Child Protection (36,38)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 6 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force (37)
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 38 and 39 of the Law on Child Protection (36,38)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo; Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (25,35)

* Country has no conscription (40)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (39)

During the reporting period, the Law on Crime Victim Compensation was adopted to ensure coverage for child victims of multiple categories of abuse. In addition, multiple agencies throughout the government adopted Administrative Instructions that clarified the roles and operations of government entities involved in the preservation of children's rights. (13)

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 & Activities
Labor Inspectorate	Operates under the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers (MFLT). 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. (13)
Kosovo Police (KP)	Enforce criminal laws on forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Anti-Trafficking Directorate, enforce laws on child trafficking. (3,4,6) Operate under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (5)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Enforces criminal laws on forced child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children through special anti-human trafficking coordinators and mechanisms. (10)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$920,700 (4)	\$874,798 (46)
Number of Labor Inspectors	37 (45)	35 (46)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (30)	Yes (46)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	N/A	Yes (46)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	10,162 (45)	5,457 (46)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (45)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	1 (16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (30)	Yes (35)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (45)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (16)

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. (5,27-29) In addition, the Labor Inspectorate coordinates inspections with CSWs for suspected abuse of children under age 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. (6,7,38) Labor inspectors also have the authority to inspect private farms in Kosovo; however, due to a lack of human resource capacity to adequately cover all sectors and regions, the Centers for Social Work (CSWs), which also face human resource and budgetary constraints, typically conduct these inspections. (5,24,39,40)

There is limited inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor. (4,5,13,41) Multiple entities have reported that there is insufficient institutional capacity at the central and municipal levels and a need to improve funding and human resources for the CSWs. This lack of institutional commitment compromised the ability of CSWs to address cases of child labor in a competent and adequate manner. (5,12,13,42,43)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators on the identification of forced begging cases.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (5)	Yes (16)
Number of Investigations	124 (4)	44 (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	67 (4)	33 (16)
Number of Convictions	7 (4)	14 (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (16)

During the reporting period, criminal law enforcement authorities attended a number of relevant trainings, including several workshops on the Law on Child Protection, roundtables on policies affecting asylum-seeking, refugee, and immigrant children, and a study visit to a children's shelter. (13) However, authorities did not consistently identify cases of forced begging, which are instead typically classified as parental neglect or abuse. (6,14,44)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism 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.

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
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. (6) Chaired by the Minister of Finance, Labor, and Transfers. (5) Comprises representatives of government agencies, KP, trade unions, and an NGO. (3) Research was unable to determine whether the committee was active during the reporting period.

Since 2013, the government has been collecting and processing data on labor violations, which it then makes available to all ministries and law enforcement bodies. (3)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
Children's Rights Action Plan (2021–2025)	Aims to improve social, economic, and legislative rights and the protection of children through developing institutions at the local and national levels. (44,45) Includes the accompanying Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023). (49) The policy was renewed and active during the reporting period. (13)
Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023)	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. (6) Active during the reporting period. (13)
Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities (2022–2024)	Focuses on employment, social issues, healthcare, and housing for the Ashkali and Roma communities. Aims to strengthen individuals' rights and full integration into society. (46) Includes targeted components that promote inclusive education for children from the Ashkali and Roma communities. The policy was renewed and active during the reporting period. (13,46)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors where child labor has been identified in the country (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Hope and Homes for Children†	Government-funded NGO shelter. Accommodates child victims of abuse and human trafficking. (40) Active during the reporting period. (16)
UN Kosovo/UNICEF Program (2021–2025)	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. (26,47) Active during the reporting period. (13)
The Helpline‡	Government-operated hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. (14) Active during the reporting period. (13)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† 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. (5,48,49)

Social services professionals in Kosovo estimate that approximately 4,300 children receive assistance per year. (50) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) notified civil society organizations that CSWs and domestic violence shelters would become the responsibility of the MOJ beginning in early 2023. (13) In addition, the government collaborated with Save the Children to develop manuals for social services case

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management. The collaboration also resulted in the creation of a mutual assistance protocol that allows both formal and informal services providers to more efficiently coordinate outreach and follow-up activities when assisting children who are more at-risk of falling outside of the system (e.g., those living in rural and remote areas). (13,51)

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
Enforcement	Ensure that Centers for Social Work have sufficient capacity, funding, human resources, and training to address the specific needs of child labor victims.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the Kosovo Police are trained to identify and properly classify cases of forced begging.	2020 – 2022
	Publish information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed.	2022
	Ensure that labor inspections are conducted in the informal sector, including in markets.	2022
Coordination	Ensure that inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor is improved.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor is fully funded and active and able to carry out its mandate to coordinate government policies to combat child labor.	2022
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Kosovo to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2022
	Eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including by making additional efforts to register Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma children at birth and ensuring the availability of native-language teaching materials and subsidized transportation.	2011 – 2022

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