



KOSOVO

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Kosovo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government passed an amendment to the Law on Social and Family Services, which continues to require the provision of social services for at-risk populations and now prohibits children’s work in nightclubs and similar venues. It also requires medical and psychological treatment and compensation for victims of child abuse. The government also doubled the budget for its labor inspectorate, increasing it from almost \$875,000 in 2022 to over \$1,706,000 in 2023, and hired 25 additional labor inspectors. In addition, the Municipality of Pristina spearheaded a new social welfare payment and childcare program for families below the national poverty line. However, despite these efforts, the Committee on the Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor continued to lack the financial support necessary to coordinate government actions to combat child labor, and children from vulnerable groups encountered barriers to accessing education.



PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	9.0% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	95.6%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	11.7%

Children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging and use in illicit activities sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, scavenging, and agriculture.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



Agriculture

Farming, including operating agricultural machinery.†
Forestry, including operating machinery and transporting wood.



Industry

Mining, including underground extraction of coal by hand.† Construction and manufacturing, including operation of tools at hazardous worksites.†



Services

Street work,† including vending small items,† manual transport of goods,† and begging.† Garbage scavenging at dumpsites.†



Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Forced begging. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

† 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.



SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Kosovo’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Legal Framework

Criminalize and prescribe punishments for the customer’s use of a child for prostitution regardless of whether the child is a victim of trafficking.

Enforcement

Conduct labor inspections in the informal sector, including in markets.

Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)

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.

Social Programs

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor in Kosovo to inform policies and programs.

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.

 **CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**





Kosovo is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls who are forced to work in massage parlors by organized criminal groups. In addition, Kosovan children and children from neighboring countries, especially Albania, are forced into street work, including begging, in Prizren and Pristina. Most of these children come from the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian minority ethnic groups. Economically vulnerable Kosovan children also sometimes work in construction and agriculture to support their families.

 **BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

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, although the law guarantees educational access to children who lack birth documentation, some undocumented children encounter challenges when trying to enroll in school. Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.

 **LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR**

Kosovo holds a unique status *vis-à-vis* UN recognition that complicates its ratification of international agreements. In addition, Article 22 of Kosovo’s Constitution incorporates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into its national legal framework. However, Kosovo does not meet the international standard for prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, 15 Years		Article 7 of the Law on Labor
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, 18 Years		Articles 20, 23, 26, 27, and 45 of the Law on Labor
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Administrative Instruction No. 05/2013; Article 45 of the Law on Labor; Administrative Instruction No. 2008
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		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 Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking.
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 165 and 166 of the Criminal Code; Articles 3.1.8 and 5 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking; Articles 21 and 22 of Administrative Instruction No. 10/2017
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 171, 231 and 235 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47 and 62 of the Law on Child Protection

Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	✓	Articles 267–273 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Law on Child Protection
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, 18 Years	✓	Article 6 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	✓	Article 149 of the Criminal Code; Articles 38 and 39 of the Law on Child Protection
Compulsory Education Age, 15 Years ‡	✓	Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education
Free Public Education	✓	Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo; Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education

* Country has no conscription

‡ Age calculated based on available information

In 2023, the government passed a new Law on Social and Family Services, which expanded upon existing legislation on the regulation of social welfare programs and continued to require the provision of social services to at-risk populations. It also amended the existing Law on Child Protection to prohibit children from working in nightclubs and similar venues (Article 44), as well as incorporated an administrative order that requires medical and psychological treatment and compensation for victims of child abuse, including child labor. Kosovo does not meet the international standard prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children because the current laws require the child to be a victim of trafficking in order to prosecute.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor. However, the labor inspectorate failed to conduct inspections in the informal sector, where much of the country’s child labor problem occurs.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

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 to regional centers for social work. During the reporting period, the government nearly doubled the Labor Inspectorate’s budget to \$1,706,228 from \$874,798, allowing MFLT to hire an additional 25 labor inspectors and carry out inspections in the high-risk agriculture and construction sectors.

Kosovo Police: Enforce criminal laws on forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Anti-Trafficking Directorate, enforce laws on child trafficking.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2023, **60** labor inspectors conducted **8,114** worksite inspections, finding **4** child labor violations. The government also conducted **92** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, initiated **35** prosecutions, and convicted **12** perpetrators.



COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</p> <p>Kosovo established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor needs to be improved.</p>	<p>Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor: Coordinates government policies to combat child labor. Comprises representatives of government agencies, the Kosovo Police, trade unions, and an NGO. During the reporting period, the Committee continued to facilitate collaboration among its constituents and conducted two mandatory annual meetings.</p>
<p>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</p> <p>Kosovo established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.</p>	<p>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. Includes the accompanying Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023). In 2023, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo responded to 60 complaints related to the protection of vulnerable children and developed a program to standardize its reporting and monitoring mechanisms related to children’s rights.</p> <p>Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023): Called 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. The policy expired during the reporting period.</p> <p>Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities (2022–2024): Focuses on employment, social issues, healthcare, education access, and housing for the Ashkali and Roma communities. In 2023, the government met with civil society partners to discuss areas for improvement under the strategy, including providing more support for targeted communities in the areas of education, employment, and housing.</p>
<p>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</p> <p>Kosovo funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors in which child labor has been identified in the country.</p> <p><i>‡ Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.</i> <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p>Hope and Homes for Children:[‡] Government-funded NGO shelters that accommodate child victims of abuse and human trafficking. In 2023, the government continued to support the shelters through financial and in-kind contributions.</p> <p>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. During the reporting period, UNICEF continued to collaborate with NGOs throughout Kosovo to provide supplementary educational services to children from vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Helpline:[‡] Government-operated hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. The Helpline was active during the reporting period.</p>

For information about USDOL’s projects to address child labor around the world, visit dol.gov/ILABprojects
 For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports