



# MONTENEGRO

## MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Montenegro made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government built and opened the first state-funded and -operated shelter for child victims of human trafficking. In addition, the government continued its support of social inclusion programs for children from vulnerable communities, including providing healthcare and educational support for children in conjunction with the United Nations Children’s Fund Country Office in Podgorica. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation received a 10 percent budget increase from the previous reporting period, and the number of Roma children enrolled in preschool education increased by 11 percent in 2023. However, despite these efforts, research found that the scope of programs to address child labor in street work in Montenegro is insufficient. Additionally, there were insufficient inspections for child labor in the agriculture and services sectors, and sectoral data on children’s work remains unavailable.



## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

### Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	17.3% (Unavailable)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	95.0%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	20.5%

Children in Montenegro are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in illicit activities and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the services sector, including street work.

### Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity



#### Services

Street work, including vending small goods and begging.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡

Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; forced begging; forced domestic work; and use in illicit activities, including the harvesting and trafficking of drugs.

‡ 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 Montenegro’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### Coordination

Establish a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor.

### Government Policies

Ensure that activities are undertaken to mainstream child labor issues into educational reform and social inclusion policies.

**Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont.)**

**Social Programs**

Build the capacity of schools and fund other services and programs to accommodate and expand education access for children with disabilities.

Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, especially in street work and forced begging.

Make additional efforts to bolster birth registration for children from the Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma communities to ensure equity in children’s access to the educational and social welfare systems.

Consistently track and publish information about children involved in the worst forms of child labor, including data on the sectoral distribution of child labor.



**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Montenegro is a source, destination, and transit country for trafficking of children for forced labor, including forced begging, especially among Roma children. Some Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian girls from impoverished households in Montenegro are sold and forced into domestic servitude in both Montenegro and Kosovo. Children, especially girls, are victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation internally and transnationally within the region.



**BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS**

The inability to enroll in school makes some Montenegrin children vulnerable to child labor. Some Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian children, as well as some Kosovar children displaced due to conflict, have difficulty accessing education services (along with other social services) because they lack birth registration documents. In addition, some rural children and children with disabilities experience difficulty physically accessing educational facilities and have limited government social services available to them.



**LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR**

Montenegro has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Montenegro’s laws are in line with relevant international standards.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>15 Years</b>		Article 16 of the Labor Law
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Articles 17, 172, and 173 of the Labor Law
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Articles 104 and 106 of the Labor Law; Articles 7 and 8 of the Regulations on Measures of Protection in the Workplace
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Article 444 of the Criminal Code; Articles 28 and 63 of the Constitution
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 444–446 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 209–211 of the Criminal Code

**Legal Framework for Child Labor (Cont.)**

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 300 and 301 of the Criminal Code
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, <b>18 Years</b>		Articles 47, 188, and 195 of the Declaration of the Law on the Army of Montenegro; Articles 162 and 163 of the Law on the Armed Forces
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	<b>N/A*</b>	Articles 47, 188, and 195 of the Declaration of the Law on the Army of Montenegro; Articles 162 and 163 of the Law on the Armed Forces
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Article 444 of the Criminal Code
Compulsory Education Age, <b>15 Years</b>		Article 4 of the Law on Primary Education
Free Public Education		Article 75 of the Constitution

\*Country has no conscription



**ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR**

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Montenegro took actions to address child labor.

**Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

**Labor Inspectorate:** Leads and monitors the enforcement of labor laws, including those that protect working children. Part of the Inspectorate General and has 15 offices that proactively plan labor inspections. The Labor Inspectorate also maintains a national call center and an e-mail line for receiving complaints.

**Ministry of Interior:** Houses the Police Directorate and the Office for the Fight Against Trafficking in Humans (Trafficking in Persons Department). An eight-member unit within the Police Directorate investigates human trafficking, forced labor, and illegal migration. Also investigates reports of child begging, develops policy to prevent future cases of forced begging, and removes child beggars from the streets through the Beggar Task Force.

**Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts**

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

In 2023, **30** labor inspectors conducted **6,345** worksite inspections, finding **186** child labor violations. The government also conducted **12** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, initiated **6** prosecutions, and convicted **1** perpetrator.



**COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

<p><b>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</b></p> <p>Montenegro established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, it lacks a mechanism to coordinate efforts to address all worst forms of child labor in the country.</p>	<p><b>Coordination Body for the Protocol on the Treatment of Bodies, Institutions, and Organizations in Montenegro with Children Involved in Street Life and Work:</b> Created to coordinate intergovernmental work on issues specifically affecting children engaged in street labor. During the reporting period, the Coordination Body conducted one formal meeting and facilitated three regional roundtables to encourage local government entities to implement activities related to the prevention of children’s involvement in hazardous street work.</p>
<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>Montenegro established policies related to child labor. However, child labor issues are not included in national policies on social inclusion and educational reforms.</p> <p><i>‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking (2019–2024):</b> Outlines objectives for addressing human trafficking by raising public awareness, strengthening the capacity for victim identification and services provision, improving interagency coordination, and raising the efficiency of prosecutions. In 2023, the government provided financial and logistical support for the construction of the new shelter for victims of child and youth trafficking, which opened in April 2024.</p> <p><b>Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child in Montenegro (2019–2023):</b> Sought to enhance the ability of children to exercise their rights by improving the application of laws related to children; supported vulnerable children, including those with disabilities; and prevented violence against children and the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the government increased the national education budget by 10 percent, and the number of children covered by the universal child benefits program increased to 128,763.</p> <p><b>Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Balkan Egyptians (2021–2025):</b> Aims to create social inclusion of Roma and Balkan Egyptians by increasing school attendance and birth registration while preventing child begging and human trafficking. Implemented by the Ministry of Justice, Human, and Minority Rights. During the reporting period, the government continued to implement the strategy by encouraging youth from vulnerable populations to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. Additionally, in 2023 the government marked an 11 percent increase in the number of Roma children enrolled in preschool education.</p>
<p><b>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</b></p> <p>In 2023, the Montenegro funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate to address the problem in all sectors.</p> <p><i>*Program was launched during the reporting period.</i>  <i>† Program is funded by the Government of Montenegro.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.</i></p>	<p><b>UNICEF Country Program (2023–2027):*</b> Addresses access to social services for children, synchronizes the legal framework with EU and UN standards, implements and monitors policies relevant to children, and applies the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Programming for 2023 included healthcare mediation for children from vulnerable communities and providing educational and psychological support to refugee children.</p> <p><b>Hotline for Victims of Human Trafficking:†</b> SOS Hotline funded by the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, under the Ministry of Interior, and run by the NGO Montenegrin Women’s Lobby. Provides advice, connects victims with service providers, and raises public awareness. The Hotline was operational during the reporting period, receiving 2,282 calls through December 2023.</p>

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