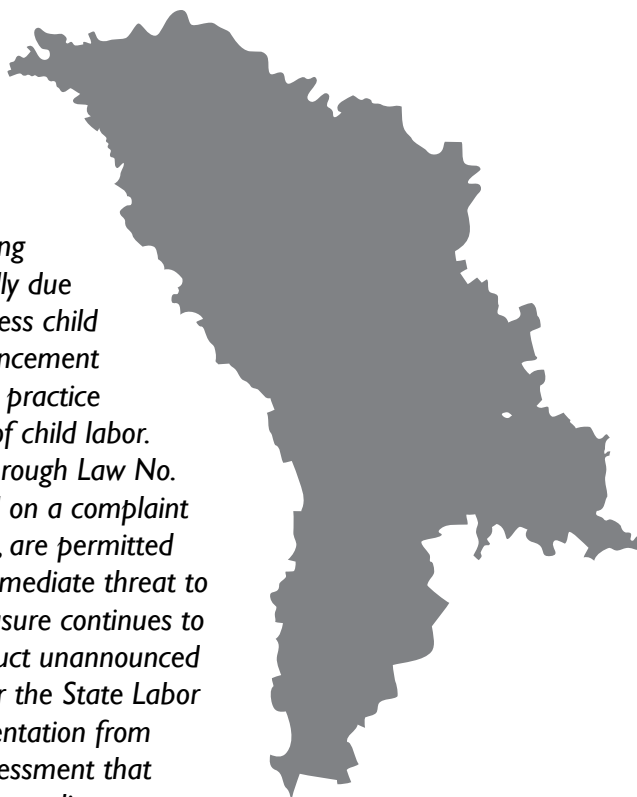


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In 2020, Moldova made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In January 2021, Parliament adopted Law No. 191, which reversed changes that had delegated responsibility for occupational safety and health inspections to 10 smaller agencies and returned it to the State Labor Inspectorate. The government also enacted legislation aimed at preventing exploitation of children separated from their parents, usually due to labor migration. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Moldova is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because it continued to implement a regression in law and practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. In August 2018, the government amended Law No. 131 through Law No. 179, such that unannounced inspections, even those based on a complaint or at the request of law enforcement or other state bodies, are permitted only on the basis of a risk assessment that indicates an immediate threat to the environment, life, health, or property. This stringent measure continues to severely limit the State Labor Inspectorate's ability to conduct unannounced inspections. In addition, inspections are only permitted after the State Labor Inspectorate first requests and receives insufficient documentation from the business being inspected or after conducting a risk assessment that finds reasonable indicators of a possible violation. When responding to a complaint, inspectors are not authorized to take action for labor violations they may see which fall outside the scope of the complaint. Children in Moldova are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Training is needed for new criminal investigators, and entities responsible for conducting occupational safety and health inspections, including of hazardous child labor, lack adequate capacity to do so. In addition, there is a lack of social programs to address child trafficking and child labor in agriculture.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Moldova are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Moldova.

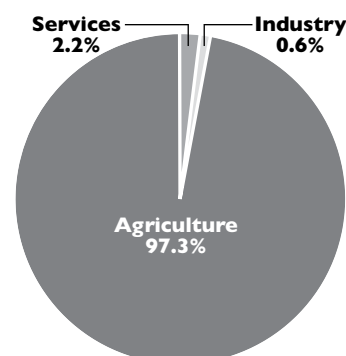
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	24.3 (102,105)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	29.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (5)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey-Child Labour Survey (LFS-SIMPOC), 2009. (6)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Agriculture,† including growing and harvesting crops, picking fruits, and raising farm animals (1,2,7-12)
	Forestry, including transporting heavy loads (7)
	Fishing, including feeding fish (2,7)
Industry	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads and welding† (1,2,7,8,13)
	Working in the garment sector (2,7)
	Baking,† including confectionary and food preservation (2,7)
	Sanitation and waste management (1)
Services	Street work, including begging and washing cars (1,3,7,12,14-16)
	Domestic work (2,16)
	Working in wholesale, retail, restaurants, amusement parks, and transportation (1,2,7,11,16,17)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,7,12,16,18,19)
	Illicit drug trafficking (1)

† 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.

Lack of information limits an assessment of the types of work that children perform and the sectors in which they work, including for the separatist region of Transnistria, which is not under the control of Moldovan authorities. (1,2,7,16) Civil society sources report that the child labor situation in Transnistria does not differ significantly from the rest of Moldova. (1) However, victims of child labor and human trafficking in Transnistria do not have access to Moldovan legal protections or social services. (4)

Both boys and girls as young as age 10 are recruited for commercial sex and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. (2-4,14,19) Child online sexual exploitation, including the production and distribution of child pornography, has increased in recent years. (7) Moldova is also a destination country for child sex tourism. (3,4)

Trafficking of children, particularly those suffering from familial neglect, continues to be a concern in Moldova and Transnistria. (3,4,9,12,16,18,20,21) Traffickers exploit children ages 5 to 14 in commercial sex and child labor, mainly in the agriculture, service, and industrial sectors. (4) Children living on the street or abandoned by parents migrating abroad remain particularly vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking, especially those in orphanages or boarding schools. (4,7,12,16,19,20) Vulnerable children from Transnistria are at an increased risk of being trafficked through Ukraine’s Odessa region. (19,22,23)




During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research established a mechanism of reporting daily attendance in all primary and secondary general educational institutions. While formally established for medical reasons, authorities report that the mechanism proved to be effective at reducing dropouts and absenteeism. (1) Children in Moldova are also guaranteed free transportation to school, and no fees are required for schooling through grade 10. However, students in grades 10 through 12 are often charged fees to rent textbooks. (1) Children from Roma communities continue to be at higher risk of dropping out due to discrimination by school officials and non-Roma students, and are more vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking. (1,4,12) Schools in rural areas often lack a sufficient number of teachers, and mainstream schools lack adequate resources to address the needs of children with disabilities. (1)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Moldova has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Moldova's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Article 46 of the Labor Code (24)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 255 of the Labor Code; Article 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (24,25)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Government Decision No. 541; Articles 2–3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 103, 105, and 255–256 of the Labor Code (24-26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 44 of the Constitution; Article 168(b) of the Criminal Code; Article 7 of the Labor Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (24,25,27,28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2 and 25–30 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; and Article 206 of the Criminal Code (25,28,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 175, 206, and 208 of the Criminal Code; Article 6 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Law No. 207 (25,28,31,32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 208 and 217 of the Criminal Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (25,28)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of Law No. 162-XVI on the Status of Military Servicemembers (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 28 of Law No. 1245-XV on the Preparation of Citizens for Homeland Defense (34)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 26 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 206(d) of the Criminal Code (28,31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 152 of the Education Code of 2014 (35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Code of 2014 (27,35)

In 2020, the government passed two laws aimed at protecting children who have been separated from their parents or adult guardians. Law No. 112 establishes procedures for identifying vulnerable children and referring them to appropriate social services, and Government Decision No. 132 provides government allowances to children and students who do not have parental care. (1,36,37)

The minimum age law does not meet international standards because it does not apply to all children working in the informal sector, including those who are self-employed. Although Article 46(3) of the Labor Code

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permits children as young as 15 to work, the law does not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken. (24) In addition, the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (24,35)

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 authority 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
Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection's (MHLSP) State Labor Inspectorate (SLI)	Enforces child labor laws through inspections of labor relations of enterprises, institutions, and organizations, regardless of their type or legal form. (1,7,38) Oversees the National Coordination Unit and Child Labor Monitoring Unit, which is responsible for coordinating activities related to the protection of victims and those vulnerable to human trafficking. (23) However, the Child Labor Monitoring Unit has been functionally defunct since 2017 when half of SLI's staff was reassigned to sectoral regulating agencies for occupational health and safety. (39) Publishes an annual report on the previous year's activities. (1,40)
Sectoral Regulating Agencies	Enforce occupational safety and health (OSH) laws, including those related to hazardous child labor, in specific sectors designated by law. Conduct OSH inspections of enterprises operating in respective sectors of responsibility. (7) Ten entities had sectoral OSH enforcement mandates: the National Food Safety Agency, the Consumer Protection and Market Surveillance Agency, the National Public Health Agency, the Environmental Protection Inspectorate, the National Road Transport Agency, the Civil Aeronautics Authority, the Naval Agency, the National Energy Regulation Agency, the National Electronic Communication and Informational Technology Regulation Agency, and the Technical Supervision Agency. (7) In January 2021, responsibility for OSH enforcement returned to SLI. (1)
Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Leads criminal investigations and arrests perpetrators, including for the trafficking of children for both labor and sexual exploitation. (4,7) Cooperates with the Border Police Inspectorate, National Anti-Corruption Center, and Customs Service. (1,7) Provides partial funding for the operation of a 24/7 trafficking in persons hotline. (4,19)
Specialized Prosecution Office for Organized Crime and Special Cases and Anti-Trafficking Bureau within the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO)	Monitors and analyzes human trafficking cases in the Anti-Trafficking Bureau within PGO. (1,3) Includes a unit to investigate and prosecute cases. (14)

During the reporting period, laws and practices introduced as part of government restructuring in 2017 and 2018 continued to limit the power of the State Labor Inspectorate (SLI) to enforce child labor laws. Laws No. 179 and No. 131 mandate that all labor inspections begin with a desk review and permit site visits only if the subject of an inspection provides insufficient documentation or if a risk-assessment procedure finds reasonable indicators of a possible violation. (1,4,7,41-45) Site visits, including those conducted in response to complaints, cannot take place until after the target of an inspection has had 5 days to respond to a request for documents. This request serves as de facto advance notice of an inspection. (1,4,7,41-45) The law contains a provision that permits inspectors to forgo the documentary inspection and proceed directly to an onsite inspection with managerial approval if a risk assessment indicates an immediate threat to the environment, life, health, or property. However, in practice this exception is not widely used, and the government reports all inspections that are not in its annual published inspection plan to be "unannounced." (1,46) Although the SLI is able to receive complaints, procedures to submit a complaint can be cumbersome, and complaints cannot be anonymous. (1,7,47) Furthermore, labor inspections that take place onsite can focus only on the potential violations that have been identified in advance through either the complaint process or a desk review, even if other violations, such as child labor, are observed. (4,39,42) Labor inspectors may face disciplinary action or civil liability for investigating issues outside the scope of the specific complaint that triggered the inspection. (39) In 2020, these strict measures continued to limit the number and scope of onsite inspections, including unannounced inspections, that labor inspectors were empowered to conduct. (1,7,41,43,44)

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In 2020, the SLI also lacked authority to investigate workplace accidents and enforce penalties for occupational safety and health (OSH) violations, including of hazardous working conditions for children. (1,4,41,42) In 2020, 10 sectoral regulating agencies had mandates to enforce OSH laws; in November, however, Parliament adopted Law No. 191 that returned this authority to the SLI beginning in January 2021. Sources indicate that a lack of training and capacity limited these agencies' ability to adequately enforce OSH laws, including those related to hazardous child labor. (1,4,7,41,42) OSH inspections routinely took place onsite, and those that were not published in its annual inspection plan occurred without prior communication with the employer. In 2020, OSH inspections identified 25 minors in the workplace but did not report that they were engaged in activities which would constitute child labor violations. (39) The law designates the SLI as national coordinator and monitor for the observance of legislation on OSH, but there are no bylaws laying out the mechanism, nor is there separate legislation dedicated to coordination and monitoring of child labor. (1)

The Transnistrian region is not under the control of Moldovan authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement there. (1,4,48,49)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of unannounced inspections in sectors in which child labor is known to occur.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$657,663 (7)	\$795,613 (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	82 (50)	78 (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (50)	No (51)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (7,49)	No (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,549† (7)	2,153 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	696† (7)	1,330 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	21† (52)	19 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	6 (52)	2 (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	3 (52)	Unknown (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (7)	No (45)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	No (53)	Yes (50)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (1)

† Data are from January 1, 2019 to October 30, 2019.

Moldova reported employing 78 labor inspectors in 2020: 42 in the SLI and 36 among the sectoral agencies responsible for OSH concerns. (1) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 20,000 workers in transition economies, Moldova would employ about 65 labor inspectors. (54,55) However, the SLI has reported that its funding and the number of labor inspectors are insufficient to adequately conduct child labor inspections. (1,7) In addition, amendments made to Decree 788 in 2018 limit the total number of personnel the SLI can hire to 28 staff members serving as the main office staff, and 45 labor inspectors serving in 10 regionally focused subdivisions. (1,7,39,48,56) Although the SLI can recommend that penalties be assessed for labor violations, the authority to impose and collect these penalties remains with the courts. (1)

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person labor inspections and interviews were suspended between March and June 2020. Labor inspections that pertain to any non-OSH concerns are the responsibility of the SLI, which must begin all investigations with a request for documentation from the employer, except in cases in which a risk assessment indicates an immediate threat to the environment, life, health, or property. (1,39) The government reported that some unannounced inspections did take place during the reporting period using the risk assessment provision, but it did not provide information on how many such inspections were carried out. (50) Documentary inspections continued on a limited basis with labor inspectors working remotely. (1) During the reporting period, the SLI identified child labor violations in the agriculture, construction, recreation, hospitality, and sanitation sectors involving a total of 19 children and 15 employers. Educational institutions referred 27 cases of suspected child labor exploitation to the National Referral System, and police referred 13 suspected cases. (1) The SLI recommended penalties for four child labor violations, which under Moldovan law must be reviewed by the courts before fines are issued and collected. Courts issued fines in two of these cases, and the other two cases remain pending. (1,51) Both government and NGO sources reported that the child labor violations identified by the government during the reporting period did not reflect the magnitude of the child labor problem in Moldova due to an insufficient number of labor inspectors, budget limitations, cultural acceptance of child labor on family farms, and legal limitations on the government’s ability to conduct inspections. (1,4)

The 10 sectoral agencies tasked with OSH labor enforcement mandates conducted a total of 815 inspections in 2020. These sectoral regulating agencies were authorized to impose penalties for OSH violations; however, no additional information on these inspections, including data on observed violations or penalties assessed, was provided for inclusion in this report. (1)

During the reporting period, the government did not provide labor inspectors with any training specific to child labor. Labor inspectors were, however, offered one training course on assisting employers and employees with practical implementation of regulations to mitigate risks related to the pandemic. (1)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient training for new criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (7)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (7)	No (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (7)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	34† (7)	16 (1)
Number of Violations Found	109 (19)	32 (1)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	30 (19)	21 (1)
Number of Convictions	16† (7)	1 (1)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (7)	No (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (7)	Yes (1)

† Data are from January 2019 to October 2019.

In 2020, authorities identified 23 child victims of trafficking (20 of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 2 for labor exploitation, and 1 for forced begging). Separately, nine minors ages 16 to 17 were used by criminal groups to traffic drugs. (1,12)

In 2020, the Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP) initiated the criminal prosecution of a woman who allegedly trafficked three children for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. In addition,

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one person was convicted for child labor offenses and sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. (1) In continuation of a case that began in 2019, in January 2020, one individual was arrested for suspected involvement in a transnational child trafficking ring that recruited and transported adults and children to Greece for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. (12)

In 2020, the CCTIP and other law enforcement agencies sent officers to at least 15 trainings on human trafficking, child pornography, child online sexual exploitation, and child protection. However, reports indicate that many authorities still lack adequate training to identify potential child trafficking victims. (1) Laws providing special interview services for child victims of human trafficking are also not uniformly applied, which can result in re-traumatization of victims. (3)

Within the judiciary, specialized judges are trained specifically to handle cases involving human trafficking and other related crimes, such as child pornography. (12) However, online recruitment, solicitation of sexually explicit content, and online threats are inconsistently handled. Investigators sometimes treat these crimes as child trafficking offenses and sometimes as sexual harassment, which is considered a less serious crime. (16) Judges sometimes reclassified cases from trafficking crimes to crimes with lesser penalties, such as pimping. When such reclassification occurs, victims of trafficking are no longer protected by the provision of the criminal code which exempts trafficking victims from criminal liability for offenses committed because of their exploitation. (4) In addition, law enforcement failed to use special investigation measures to investigate child pornography, which was not treated as a serious crime by investigators. (16)

Criminal investigators within the CCTIP have well-furnished offices as a result of USG support over the last 10 years. However, the CCTIP does not have sufficient vehicles or fuel allocations for its daily investigations activities or updated computer equipment. (1) High staff turnover in the past year has also hindered the CCTIP's effectiveness. (1,4)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder adequate coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination efforts of the National Council for the Protection of Child Rights.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council for Human Rights	Monitors and assesses the implementation of the Human Rights National Action Plan (2018–2022), which includes activities dedicated to protecting child rights and combating exploitation of children, including in child labor. (1,7,57,58) Monitors, evaluates, and coordinates efforts to comply with other national policies related to human rights and human rights treaties to which Moldova is a State Party, including those related to child labor. (57)
National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates efforts to prevent and combat child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Members include SLI, Security and Intelligence Service, Agency for Public Services, and other government departments. (2,8,16,22) Drafts legislation related to human trafficking, participates in anti-trafficking campaigns, and develops national action plans. (18) In May 2020, published a national report on the implementation of anti-trafficking policy in the previous year. (59)
National Referral System for the Protection and Assistance of Victims and Potential Victims of Human Trafficking (NRS)	Builds the capacity of multidisciplinary teams at the local level, which include community social assistants, police officers, and NGO workers, to improve victim identification and referral for crisis intervention and rehabilitation. (1,16,18) Part of MHLSP and represents the main institutional mechanism for the provision of rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to victims of labor exploitation and sexual violence. (1,60)
National Council for the Protection of Child Rights	Coordinates national efforts to combat child exploitation and improve access to education. (8) Chaired by the Prime Minister, and includes the Deputy Minister of Health, Labor, and Social Protection, and representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Education, Interior, Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and others. (1,61) Has a working group to discuss existing gaps in the current birth registration process and develop recommendations. (61,62) Met three times during the reporting period, but research was unable to determine whether any actions were taken to advance the Council's mandate. At its last meeting, the Council discussed amendments to the law on labor inspections which returned responsibility for OSH inspections to SLI. (1)

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (Cont.)

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Human Rights Ombudsman	Monitors and publishes annual reports on observance of human rights, including the rights of children. Through the Office of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights, receives and responds to complaints about children's rights violations, including child labor. (63) In 2020, published a report on intersectoral cooperation in the field of children's rights. (64)

In February, the Government revised Government Decision No. 65, originally enacted in 2019, to establish the National Council for Human Rights with the purpose of monitoring and assessing the implementation of the 2018–2022 Human Rights National Action Plan and other national policy documents. (1,65) The 2018–2022 Human Rights National Action Plan includes items to address the protection of children's rights and prevention of violence against and exploitation of children. During the reporting period, the new Council met once to review a number of Moldova's international commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and human rights. (1)

The government worked with the IOM to expand the mandate of the National Referral System into a National Referral Mechanism that would merge with other victim assistance mechanisms and offer protection and services to additional vulnerable populations. During the reporting period, this expansion was submitted by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection as part of the government's 2020–2030 National Development Strategy, but it was not approved. (1)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Protection Strategy (2014–2020)	Includes the goals of preventing and combating violence, neglect, and the exploitation of children. (66) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Child Protection Strategy during the reporting period.
Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2018–2020)	Outlines how law enforcement agencies should work to combat human trafficking, provides support to victims of human trafficking, and aims to create standards for the operation of victim witness rooms for children, among other tasks. (3,67) Carried out by the Permanent Secretariat Directorate of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons. (3) Includes an accompanying National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2018–2023. (3,67) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings during the reporting period.
Moldova Strategy Country Note Program Priorities (2018–2022)	Focuses on protecting all children's rights, including education and health, especially for children from ethnic minorities, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and children left behind because of migration. (68) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Moldova-EU Association Agenda (2017–2019)	Protected and promoted children's rights. (69,70) The Government of Moldova and the Council of the EU drafted changes to a number of laws on child rights concerning adoption and custody of children whose parents have migrated outside the country. The changes were approved by Parliament in July 2020. (1)
Action Plan to Support the Roma People (2016–2020)	Aimed to promote social inclusion of Roma people. Included the goals of education, social protection, and combating discrimination. (71,72) Funded by the government, private partnerships, and the EU. (70) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Action Plan to Support the Roma People during the reporting period.

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (7,58)

During the reporting period, the government worked with UNICEF to begin drafting a new National Program on Child Protection for 2021–2025. (1)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Decent Work Country Program (2016–2020)	ILO program that aims to gather statistics on the prevalence of child labor, build the capacity of the labor inspectorate, and combat labor exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors. (73) In 2020, the government approved legislative changes proposed as a part of this program that returned OSH inspections to SLI. (50)
Center for Protection and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking†	Government-funded shelter for victims of human trafficking from Moldova that offers accommodations, rehabilitation, and reintegration services, and which contains a special wing for child victims. (1,7) In 2020, 21 children received services at these shelters. (1,12)
Child Helpline‡	Managed by the NGO National Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, provides psychological counseling and information to parents and children experiencing violence, neglect, or exploitation. (7,12) In 2020, the helpline received 4,268 calls. (12)
Hotlines‡	One human trafficking hotline is managed by MHLSP, and refers cases within NRS. (3,7) PGO manages the Anti-Trafficking Green Line Telephone for specialist prosecutors. (1,7) In addition, the NGO La Strada manages the national hotline for women and children, which received 2,040 calls in 2020. (12)
Social Aid Program and Social Support for Families with Children‡	Provides cash assistance to families. The Social Aid Program, implemented by the district departments of social assistance and family protection, has provided aid for low-income families since 2008; this program continued to operate in 2020. (1,74) The Social Support Service for Families with Children program has operated since 2013. The government allocated \$1.85 million for families in 2020. (1)

† Program is funded by the Government of Moldova.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,7,19)

Civil society organizations have assisted in removing children from exploitive situations, but much of this work is done with the support of foreign donors. Observers report there are insufficient services for resocialization and reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. (1,12) Existing social programs do not meet the current level of need, particularly for children working in agriculture and child victims of human trafficking who require long-term care. (3,7)

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 Moldova (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that labor legislation covers children working in the informal sector, including those who are self-employed.	2020
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2020
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2020
Enforcement	Ensure that entities responsible for conducting occupational safety and health inspections have the training and capacity to carry out these inspections in all sectors in which child labor is known to occur so that child labor violations are accurately detected.	2018 – 2020
	Strengthen the labor inspection system by eliminating barriers for onsite inspections and conducting unannounced inspections.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that labor inspectors are empowered to identify and assess penalties for child labor violations detected during inspections, even if the inspection was not conducted in response to a child labor complaint.	2019 – 2020
	Clearly define the responsibilities of the Child Labor Monitoring Unit and ensure that it is able to carry out its mandate.	2019 – 2020

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors and funding for the State Labor Inspectorate to ensure that it provides inspectors with the financial resources necessary to inspect for child labor.	2012 – 2020
	Ensure the process to file child labor complaints is simple, transparent, and can be done anonymously.	2019 – 2020
	Publish information on the number of child labor violations detected during occupational safety and health inspections conducted by sectoral regulating agencies.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that investigators, including police officers and Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons investigators, receive training on laws and investigative techniques related to the worst forms of child labor, especially for online child pornography and children left behind without parental care.	2016 – 2020
	Pursue prosecution of the worst forms of child labor under the appropriate statutes and maintain protection for victims who commit crimes as a result of their exploitation.	2020
Coordination	Ensure that the National Council for the Protection of Child Rights meets and carries out its mandate.	2019 – 2020
Government Policies	Publish information about activities undertaken to implement policies related to child labor, including the Child Protection Strategy, the Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Moldova Strategy Country Note Program Priorities, and the Action Plan to Support the Roma People.	2019 – 2020
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs, including for the separatist region of Transnistria.	2013 – 2020
	Provide adequate resources for schools in rural and poorer communities, as well as those serving children with disabilities.	2020
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education by removing informal fees for school supplies.	2018 – 2020
	Institute targeted support programs that eliminate discrimination and violence against Roma children and promote equal access to education.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure sufficient support for child trafficking victims and children working in agriculture.	2015 – 2020

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