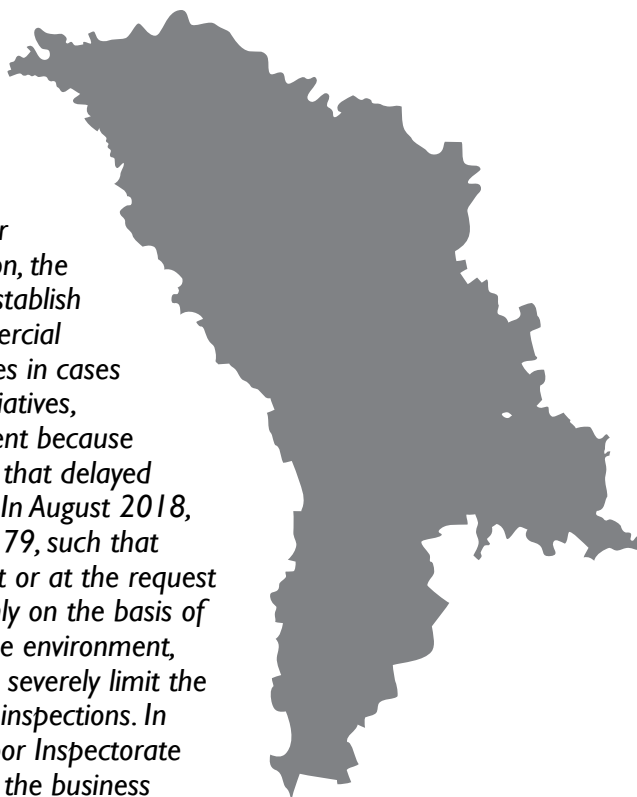


## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW AND PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2021, Moldova made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In January, Law No. 191 went into effect, 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. Legislation was passed to permit a staffing increase at the State Labor Inspectorate from 73 to 104 full-time inspectors. In addition, the Prosecutor General's Office introduced new legislation to establish prescriptive sentences for trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation, including provisions for harsher penalties in cases with aggravated circumstances. However, despite these initiatives, 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 that 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 labor inspections, including of hazardous child labor, lack adequate funding, personnel, and equipment. 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. (I-5) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Moldova.

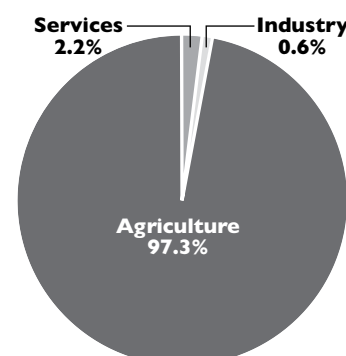
**Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

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 (%)		103.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey-Child Labour Survey (LFS-SIMPOC), 2009. (7)

**Figure I. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



# Moldova

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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	Agriculture, <sup>†</sup> including growing and harvesting crops, picking fruits, and raising farm animals (1-3,5,8-13)
	Forestry, including transporting heavy loads (8)
	Fishing, including feeding fish (8)
Industry	Construction, <sup>†</sup> including carrying heavy loads and welding <sup>‡</sup> (2,5,8,9)
	Manufacturing (1)
	Working in the garment sector (1,3)
	Baking, <sup>†</sup> including confectionary and food preservation (1,3)
	Sanitation and waste management (2)
Services	Street work, including portering, begging, and washing cars (1,2,4,13-16)
	Domestic work (3,16)
	Working in wholesale, retail, restaurants, amusement parks, and transportation (1-3,12,16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor <sup>‡</sup>	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,5,13,16-18)
	Forced begging (1,3,5,13,16,18)
	Use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs (1,2)

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

<sup>‡</sup> 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 in the separatist region of Transnistria, which is not under the control of Moldovan authorities. (1-3,8,16) Civil society sources report that the child labor situation in Transnistria does not differ significantly from the rest of Moldova. (1,2) However, survivors of child labor and human trafficking in Transnistria do not have access to Moldovan legal protections or social services. (5)

Both boys and girls as young as age 10 are forced into various forms of commercial sexual exploitation. (3,4,14,17,18) Online sexual exploitation of children, including the production and distribution of child pornography, has increased in recent years. (1,8) Moldova is also a destination country for tourism for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation of children. (4,17) Due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of human trafficking outside of the country decreased during the reporting period. Most cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children occurred in the capital city of Chisinau. (1)

Trafficking of children, particularly those suffering from familial neglect, continues to be a concern in Moldova and Transnistria. (4,5,10,13,16,19,20) Traffickers exploit children ages 5 to 14 for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation and child labor, mainly in the agricultural, service, and industrial sectors. (17) Children living on the street or abandoned by parents migrating abroad remain particularly vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking, and observers express concern that corrupt management in state institutions like orphanages and boarding schools exploits children in domestic services or on farms. (1,5,8,13,16-19) Vulnerable children from Transnistria are at an increased risk of being trafficked through Ukraine's Odessa region. (18,21,22)







During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research mandated the reporting of daily attendance in all preschool, 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. (1,2) 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. (1,2,13,17) 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. (1,2)

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED LAW AND PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

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

**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 (23)
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 (23,24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Government Decision No. 541; Articles 2 and 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor; Articles 103, 105, 255, and 256 of the Labor Code (23-25)
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 (23,24,26,27)
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; Article 206 of the Criminal Code (24,27,29)
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 (24,27,30,31)
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 (24,27)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of Law No. 162-XVI on the Status of Military Servicemembers (32)
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 (33)
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 (27,30)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 152 of the Education Code of 2014 (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Constitution; Article 9 of the Education Code of 2014 (26,34)

In 2021, the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) introduced legislation aimed at standardizing sentences for individuals convicted of offenses related to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. The draft legislation also includes provisions for harsher sentences in cases involving aggravated circumstances. (1)

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The Labor Code's minimum age provisions do not meet international standards because they do not apply to all children working in the informal sector. Although Article 46(3) of the Labor Code permits children as young as age 15 to work, the law does not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken. (23) 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. (23,34)

### 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. (1,2,8,35) Publishes an annual report on the previous year's activities. (1,36) Oversees the National Coordination Unit, as well as the Child Labor Monitoring Unit which is responsible for coordinating activities related to the protection of survivors and those vulnerable to human trafficking. (22) In November 2021, the SLI collaborated with the ILO to launch an online platform for reporting worksite accidents, which is also designed to serve as a resource for labor inspectors to plan inspections. (37) 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. (38)
Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Leads criminal investigations and arrests perpetrators of human trafficking offenses, including the trafficking of children for labor or commercial sexual exploitation. (8,17) Cooperates with the Border Police Inspectorate, National Anti-Corruption Center, and Customs Service. (2,8) Provides partial funding for the operation of a 24/7 trafficking in persons hotline. (17,18)
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 the PGO. (2,4,5) Includes a unit that investigates and prosecutes cases. (14)
Center for Combating Cybercrime within the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Investigates cybercrime, including online commercial exploitation of children, and is the unit with primary responsibility for investigating these crimes at the National Inspectorate for Investigations of the General Inspectorate of Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (1,39)

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. (1,2,8,17,40-44) 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. (2,5,8,40-44) These laws permit 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. (40,44)

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." (1,2,38) Although the SLI is able to receive complaints, procedures to submit a complaint can be cumbersome, and complaints cannot be anonymous. (1,2,8,45) 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. (5,38,41) Labor inspectors may face disciplinary action or civil liability for investigating issues outside the scope of the specific complaint that triggered the inspection. (38) In 2021, these strict measures continued to limit the number and scope of onsite inspections, including unannounced inspections, that labor inspectors were empowered to conduct. (1,8,40,42,43)

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The Transnistrian region is not under the control of Moldovan authorities, who are prevented from carrying out inspections and law enforcement there. (1,2,5,46,47)

**Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a 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	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$795,613 (2)	\$705,364 (1)
Number of Labor Inspectors	78 (2)	104 (1)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (2)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	2,153 (2)	2,279 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	1,330 (2)	1,172 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	19 (2)	31 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	2 (2)	6 (1)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (2)	3 (1)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (44)	No (44)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (49)	Unknown (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (1)

In January 2021, Law No. 191 went into effect and returned all labor inspection responsibilities to the SLI. (1,8) Moldova reported employing 104 labor inspectors in 2021, all of whom are permanent employees of the SLI. This staffing increase was the result of Government Decision 149, which increased the SLI staff limit to 104, up from 78 in previous years. (1) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 20,000 workers in transition economies, Moldova would need to employ roughly 65 labor inspectors. (50,51) However, the SLI has reported that its funding and the number of labor inspectors are insufficient to adequately conduct child labor inspections. (1,2,8) Although the SLI can recommend that penalties be assessed for labor violations, the authority to impose and collect these penalties remains with the courts. If an inspector finds that a violation of labor law has occurred, they must issue recommendations to the offender on how to resolve the violation. (1,2) If the violation is not resolved after the prescribed period (no less than 30 days, but no more than 90 days), then the SLI may refer the case to a competent court. This approach often results in employers making the recommended remediation to avoid a fine, then resuming the offending practice after the case has been cleared. (1)

By law, labor inspections must begin 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. (1,2,38) When reporting inspection data, the SLI divides inspections into two categories—those that appear on the annual inspection plan and those that arise during the year when triggered by complaints or incidents. The latter are considered to be unannounced whether they are preceded by a desk audit or not. (1) It is therefore not possible to determine whether any truly unannounced inspections took place in 2021, and if so, how many. During the reporting period, the SLI reported 31 labor violations involving minors. (1) The SLI also referred six cases to courts for penalties, one of which was rejected. Courts imposed fines in three cases, and two remain

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outstanding. (1) In one case, the SLI found that a firm illegally employed minors at a clothing factory and made recommendations to the firm on how to bring their employment into conformity with Moldovan labor standards. However, before any further action could be taken, the minors reportedly left the firm. (1) 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. The number of child survivors of abuse, trauma, and exploitation supported by NGOs is substantially greater than the number of government investigations of such cases. (1,5)

During the reporting period, the government did not provide labor inspectors with any training specific to child labor. However, the ILO supported a training for 83 inspectors on creating a modern and effective labor inspection system. (1)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Moldova 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 new criminal investigators.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (2)	N/A (1)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (2)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	16 (2)	55 (52)
Number of Violations Found	32 (2)	34 (52)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	21 (2)	15 (52)
Number of Convictions	1 (2)	22 (52)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (2)	Yes (52)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (2)	Yes (1)

During the reporting period, law enforcement authorities took several steps to prevent and eliminate the rise in cases of online commercial sexual exploitation of children, such as obtaining new specialized equipment from the U.S. Government to investigate cybercrime, including child pornography. The Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP) and other law enforcement agencies sent officers, both newly employed and veterans, to at least 15 different trainings on human trafficking, child pornography, child online sexual exploitation, and child protection. (1,53) Additionally, the PGO, in coordination with an NGO, created a guide on addressing sexual abuse and exploitation of children through information technologies among children who spent significant amounts of time online as a result of the pandemic. The government also made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts by developing, in collaboration with an NGO, the methodology for a behavioral analysis study of convicted child sex offenders. (5)

In 2021, authorities initiated 14 new investigations into cases of trafficking children for commercial exploitation, and 4 new investigations of trafficking children for labor exploitation. Courts also convicted 25 individuals for child trafficking and 24 individuals for child pornography offenses. (53) The government reported additional investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for child labor offenses, but did not provide any further details for inclusion in this report. (52) However, reports indicate that many authorities still lack adequate training to identify potential child trafficking survivors. (5) Laws providing special interview services for child survivors of human trafficking are also not uniformly applied, which can result in re-traumatization of survivors. In some cases involving child survivors ages 14 to 18, judges permitted traffickers to be present during child interviews and often refused to apply special interviewing measures, such as conducting interviews in specially equipped rooms and with a psychologist present. (4,5,53) Even in cases in which children are provided with alternate means of



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testifying, such as from a separate room with video and audio recording, these rooms are often not adequately soundproofed which results in the child being able to hear everything that is happening in the main courtroom, including the suspect's reactions to their testimony. (53)

The PGO expanded its mandate to investigate child sexual exploitation cases involving information and communication technologies, and approved guidelines for identifying, investigating, and prosecuting such cases. (4) Within the judiciary, specialized judges are trained specifically to handle cases involving human trafficking and other related crimes, such as child pornography. (13) Judges sometimes reclassified cases from human trafficking crimes to crimes with lesser penalties, such as pimping. When such reclassification occurs, survivors of human trafficking are no longer protected by the provision of the criminal code that exempts trafficking survivors from criminal liability for offenses committed because of their exploitation. (5) Sources report that child survivors of human trafficking were in some cases charged for their participation in unlawful acts that they were compelled to commit as a result of being trafficked. (5)

Criminal investigators within the CCTIP have well-furnished offices as a result of U.S. Government support over the last 10 years. However, the CCTIP does not have sufficient vehicles or fuel allocations for its daily investigation activities, nor does it have updated computer equipment. (1,2) High staff turnover in the past year has also hindered the CCTIP's effectiveness. (1,2,17)

## 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 effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including a lack of 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 preventing exploitation of children, including in child labor. (2,8,54,55) 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. (54) Research was unable to determine whether the council was active during the reporting period.
National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates efforts to prevent and eliminate child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Members include SLI, Security and Intelligence Service, Agency for Public Services, and other government departments. (1,3,9,16,21) Drafts legislation related to human trafficking, participates in human anti-trafficking campaigns, and develops national action plans. In April 2021, published a report on the previous year's activities. (56)
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 survivor identification and referral for crisis intervention and rehabilitation. (2,16) Part of MHLSP, and represents the main institutional mechanism for the provision of rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to survivors of labor exploitation and sexual violence. NRS continued to operate during the reporting period. (1,2,57)
Intersectorial Collaboration Mechanism for the Protection of Children	Enables social services to refer cases to law enforcement when children are presumed to be at risk of violence, neglect, exploitation, or human trafficking. Implemented through collaboration between public authorities at the central or local level. (1,5) Research was unable to determine whether this mechanism was active during the reporting period.
National Council for the Protection of Child Rights	Coordinates national efforts to address child exploitation and improve access to education. (9) Chaired by the Prime Minister, and includes the Deputy Minister of Health, Labor, and Social Protection, as well as representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Education, Interior, Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and others. (2) Has a working group to discuss existing gaps in the current birth registration process and develop recommendations. (58) Research was unable to determine whether the council was active during the reporting period.
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. (59) In 2021, published several reports on child welfare including impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on compliance with UN conventions, and an analysis of the Ombudsman's activities between 2016 and 2020. (60-62)

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The expansion of the National Referral System into a National Referral Mechanism that would merge with other survivor assistance mechanisms and offer protection and services to additional vulnerable populations, proposed in 2020, has not yet been approved. (2,5) As in previous years, the number of survivors referred for services continues to be far lower than the number of victims identified due to limited resources. (53)

## 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 a lack of implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
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 parental migration. (65) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (8,55)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 inadequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Decent Work Country Program (2021–2024)	ILO program that aims to gather statistics on the prevalence of child labor; build the capacity of the labor inspectorate, and eliminate labor exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors. In 2021, the government signed a new Decent Work agreement for 2021 through 2024, which focuses on creating inclusive and productive employment for youth, effective protection at work, and improved social dialogue. (66)
Center for Protection and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking†	Government-funded shelter for survivors of human trafficking from Moldova that offers accommodations, rehabilitation, and reintegration services, and which contains a special wing for child survivors. (1,2,8) In 2021, 57 children received services at this shelter. (1)
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. (1,8,13) In 2021, the helpline received 3,349 calls. (1)
Hotlines‡	A dedicated children's hotline is managed by MHLSP, and refers cases within NRS. (1,4,8) In 2021, the child hotline received seven calls, all of which resulted in investigations of either child labor or child trafficking. (53) PGO manages the Anti-Trafficking Green Line Telephone for specialist prosecutors. (1,2,8) In addition, the NGO La Strada manages the national hotline for women and children, which received 2,040 calls in 2021. (1)
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 2021. (1,2,67) The Social Support Service for Families with Children program has operated since 2013. The government allocated \$1.85 million for families in 2021. (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. (4,8,18)

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 survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. (1,2,5,13) Existing social programs do not meet the current level of need, particularly for children working in agriculture and child survivors of human trafficking who require long-term care. (4,8)

## 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).



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**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.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2020 – 2021
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
Enforcement	Clearly define the responsibilities of the Child Labor Monitoring Unit and ensure that it is able to carry out its mandate.	2019 – 2021
	Strengthen the labor inspection system by eliminating barriers for onsite inspections and conducting unannounced inspections.	2018 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Increase funding for the State Labor Inspectorate to ensure that it provides inspectors with the resources necessary to inspect for child labor.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that the process to file child labor complaints is simple, transparent, and can be done anonymously.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that labor inspectors receive training specific to child labor.	2021
	Ensure that judicial authorities and 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 – 2021
	Pursue prosecution of the worst forms of child labor under the appropriate statutes and maintain protection for survivors who commit crimes as a result of their exploitation.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2019 – 2021
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Moldova Strategy Country Note Program Priorities and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2019 – 2021
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 – 2021
	Provide adequate resources for schools in rural and poorer communities, as well as those serving children with disabilities.	2020 – 2021
	Implement oversight of state children's institutions to prevent exploitation of children by management.	2021
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education by removing informal fees for school supplies.	2018 – 2021
	Institute targeted support programs that eliminate discrimination and violence against Roma children and promote equal access to education.	2014 – 2021
	Ensure sufficient support for child trafficking survivors and children working in agriculture.	2015 – 2021

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