

Kosovo

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Kosovo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted seven implementing regulations related to the 2023 Law on Social and Family Services, which expanded existing legislation on the regulation of social welfare programs and continued to require the provision of social services to at-risk populations. The government also published the State Strategy for Youth 2024–2032, which includes improving access to education and addressing discrimination of Roma and Ashkali communities. Additionally, the government doubled the child allowance for families with one child and tripled them for families with three or more children. However, despite these efforts, Kosovan law does not meet the international standard prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children because the current laws require the child to be deemed a victim of trafficking in order for the perpetrator to be prosecuted. The government also failed to conduct inspections in the informal sector. Additionally, children from the Ashkali, Roma, and Egyptian communities have difficulty accessing education, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and 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. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, scavenging, construction, 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† and construction.
Services	Street work,† including vending small items,† washing car windows, manual transport of goods,† and begging.† Scavenging garbage for metal scraps.†
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging. Commercial sexual exploitation, 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.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Criminalize the use of children in prostitution, regardless of whether they have been legally deemed victims of trafficking.
Enforcement	Conduct labor inspections in the informal sector, including in markets.
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of penalties imposed and collected for child labor violations.

Area	Suggested Action
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, Egyptian, and Roma children at birth and ensuring the availability of native-language teaching materials and subsidized transportation.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children in Kosovo are vulnerable to child trafficking, especially of girls who are forced to work in massage parlors by organized criminal groups. According to a UNICEF study, 88 percent of children engaged in street work are from the Ashkali, Roma, and Egyptian communities, with 39 percent of those children having never attended school. Economically vulnerable Kosovan children also sometimes work in construction and agriculture to support their families.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children lacking Albanian or Serbian language skills, 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 children without birth documentation 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 because the current laws require the child to be a victim of trafficking in order to prosecute.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	15	✓	Article 7 of the Law on Labor
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	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 165, 228, 232, and 234 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47, 51-52, and 62 of the Law on Child Protection

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	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	✓	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‡	✓	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

‡ Age calculated based on available information

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ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, 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, in which 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.
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
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2024, **60** labor inspectors conducted **11,141** worksite inspections, finding **13** child labor violations. The government also conducted **113** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, initiated **86** prosecutions, and convicted **12** perpetrators.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Kosovo established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, insufficient inter-ministerial communication hindered its effectiveness.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor
The Inter-Institutional Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor: Under MFLT, coordinates government policies to combat child labor. Comprised representatives of government agencies, the Kosovo Police, trade unions, and an NGO. The committee held two mandatory meetings and remained active in 2024.

Kosovo established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor
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).
National Strategy Against Human Trafficking in Kosovo (2022–2026): Calls for strengthening institutional mechanisms, improving victim identification, and strengthening regional and international cooperation on human trafficking. Active in 2024.
Strategy for the Advancement of Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities (2022–2026): Aims to improve the overall condition of Roma and Ashkali communities through equal access to education, poverty reduction, elimination of discrimination, and other social dimensions. Includes an Action Plan for 2022–2024. In 2024, the government increased funding for youth learning centers by 25% and took actions to increase employment for adults, which reduces pressures on children to work.

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

Kosovo funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, social programs are insufficient to cover all relevant sectors, including street work and begging.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
Hope and Homes for Children:‡ Government-funded NGO shelters that accommodate child victims of abuse and human trafficking. In 2024, the government continued to support the shelters through financial and in-kind contributions.
UNICEF Kosovo 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. In 2024, UNICEF began planning for the 2026–2030 program.
Helpline:‡ Government-operated hotline for victims of human trafficking and for reporting other criminal offenses. Operates 24/7 and offers information on counseling services, victims’ rights, and referral to service providers. The Helpline was active during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

† The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports