

Moldova

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Moldova made significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government took steps to reduce the vulnerability of poor, rural, and institutionalized children to child labor by increasing financial assistance to families and conducting targeted hiring campaigns for teachers in rural areas and social workers. The Parliament passed amendments to the Labor Code to update its light work framework and bring it into line with international standards. The State Labor Inspectorate also continued to conduct unannounced inspections, many of which focused on identifying work performed outside the bounds of legal contracts, which is the most common labor law violation involving children. The enabling legislation for the National Program for Child Protection was amended to specifically include measures to protect children from online exploitation. In addition, the government introduced a new digital Child Protection Information system—a digital platform designed to centralize and streamline case files for at-risk children. However, despite these efforts, cooperation among social protection, health, and law enforcement entities remains uneven with regard to providing appropriate services and reintegration assistance to child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons. Social programs to support child survivors of exploitation are also inadequate.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	24.3% (102,105)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	92.1%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	29.0%

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14	
Sector/Industry	Percent of Population
Agriculture	97.3%
Industry	0.6%
Services	2.2%

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.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Working in agriculture,† including growing and harvesting crops, picking fruits, spraying agro-chemicals, and raising farm animals. Forestry, including transporting heavy loads, and fishing, including feeding fish.
Industry	Construction,† including carrying heavy loads; manufacturing and metalworking; working in the textile and garment sectors; and sanitation and waste management.
Services	Street work, including portering, begging, and washing cars; domestic work; working in hospitality, confectionary, retail, wholesale trade, restaurants, and amusement parks.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking; forced begging; and use in illicit activities, including the trafficking of drugs. Recruitment of children into militias by non-state armed groups in Transnistria.

† 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 Moldova’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law’s light work provisions or its implementation regulations specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken to prevent children from involvement in child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Enforcement	Ensure that judicial authorities, prosecutors, and investigators, including public lawyers, continue to receive training on laws and maintaining a victim-centered approach to criminal justice, especially related to child trafficking.
	Standardize handling of child labor crimes by ensuring that similar cases are classified and penalized appropriately.
Coordination	Improve cooperation among social protection, health, and law enforcement entities with regard to providing appropriate services and reintegration assistance to child survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking in persons.
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.
	Provide adequate resources for schools in rural and poorer communities, as well as those serving children with disabilities.
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers to education by removing informal fees for school supplies, including textbooks.
	Institute targeted support programs that eliminate discrimination and violence against Roma children and ensure their access to education.
	Ensure sufficient social, psychological, and financial support for child survivors of human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and abuse, as well as children working in agriculture.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Trafficking of children from rural and poor families continues to be a concern in Moldova, including in the separatist region of Transnistria, which is outside of the *de facto* control of the Moldovan government. Children in Transnistria are also at risk for recruitment into the militia by non-state groups. Children left behind by parents who work abroad, children living on the street, or those who are from Ukraine remain particularly vulnerable, as do children in welfare systems or aging out of such systems. Online commercial sexual exploitation of children has also increased in recent years. Children from Roma communities are also vulnerable due to discrimination, a low level of formal education, and reluctance to interact with the state either to report issues or seek assistance.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in Moldova are guaranteed free transportation to school, and no fees are required for schooling through grade nine. However, students in grades 10 through 12 are often charged fees to rent textbooks. Children from Roma communities also continue to be less likely to enroll in school and are at higher risk of dropping out due in part to discrimination by school officials and distrust of public institutions by Roma families. Children from Ukraine, including Roma children, may have had their schooling interrupted and require additional interventions before they can successfully integrate into mainstream schools. Schools in rural areas often lack a sufficient number of teachers, and public schools lack adequate resources to address the needs of children with disabilities.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Moldova has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Moldova's light work provisions or its implementation regulations do not specify the conditions in which light work may be undertaken to prevent children from involvement in child labor.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	16	✓	Article 46 of the Labor Code; Article 55 ¹ (2) of the Contraventions Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 255 of the Labor Code; Article 3 of the Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	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
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Article 44 of the Constitution; Article 168(b) of the Criminal Code; Article 7 of the Labor Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 2, 27, and 30 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; Article 206 of the Criminal Code
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✓	Articles 175, 206, 208, 208.1, and 208.2 of the Criminal Code; Article 6 of the Law on the Rights of the Child
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Articles 208 and 217 of the Criminal Code; Collective Convention on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 12 of Law No. 162-XVI on the Status of Military Servicemembers
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Article 28 of Law No. 1245-XV on the Preparation of Citizens for Homeland Defense
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Article 26 of the Law on the Rights of the Child; Article 206(d) of the Criminal Code
Compulsory Education Age	18	✓	Articles 13 and 152 of the Education Code of 2014
Free Public Education		✓	Article 35 of the Constitution; Articles 9 and 152 of the Education Code of 2014

In September 2024, Moldova's Parliament passed legislation implementing a light work framework which clarified the conditions under which light work can be performed. Additionally, Government Decision No. 456/2024, approved in June 2024, ensures that children who are victims of or witnesses to crimes are treated uniformly and appropriately when participating in judicial proceedings. The Criminal Code was also updated to criminalize knowingly using products and/or services that are the result of child trafficking.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Moldova took actions to address child labor. However, judicial authorities and investigators may not receive adequate training on handling cases involving children, particularly children who are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Labor and Social Protection's State Labor Inspectorate: Enforces child labor laws through inspections of labor relations of enterprises, institutions, and organizations. Publishes an annual report on the previous year's activities. Also operates a dedicated children's hotline that refers child survivors of human trafficking for specialized legal, psychological, and social services under the National Referral System.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Ministry of Internal Affairs: Oversees law enforcement agencies such as the National Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), which leads criminal investigations against perpetrators of human trafficking crimes, including the trafficking of children for labor or commercial sexual exploitation. CCTIP also cooperates with the Border Police Inspectorate, National Anti-Corruption Center, and Customs Service, and provides partial funding for the operation of a 24/7 trafficking in persons hotline. Also contains the Center for Combating Cybercrime, which investigates cybercrime, including online commercial sexual exploitation of children, and is the unit with primary responsibility for investigating these crimes at the National Inspectorate for Investigations of the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 2024, members of the National Inspectorate for Investigations conducted 15 awareness-raising sessions in schools as part of National Anti-Trafficking Week, during which 1,180 students were educated about child trafficking and exploitation.

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	No
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

In 2024, **57** labor inspectors conducted **1,144** planned inspections and **1,256** unannounced inspections, finding **70** child labor violations. Between January 1 and November 8, 2024, the government also initiated **19** criminal cases relating to suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, resulting in **14** convictions.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Moldova established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, there remains a lack of effective coordination among bodies responsible for identifying children in child labor and providing services for their rehabilitation.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons: Coordinates efforts to prevent and eliminate child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Members include the State Labor Inspectorate, the Security and Intelligence Service, the Agency for Public Services, and other government departments. In July 2024, published a report on the previous year's activities.

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

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

National Program for Child Protection (2022–2026): Sets the objectives and priority actions to strengthen children's social protection. Includes an Action Plan containing 72 actions to address child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including through online means. In 2024, new legislation was adopted which includes additional actions under this Program, including provisions designed to protect children from online labor exploitation.

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

Moldova funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs lack sufficient services for resocialization and reintegration of child survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
RESTART Social Assistance Reform Program: ‡ A series of reforms initiated in 2023 to government social assistance programs designed to improve access and reduce poverty, particularly among children. In 2024, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection oversaw a systemic reorganization that transferred responsibilities from 33 district councils to 10 newly created Territorial Social Assistance Agencies and implemented an initial digitization of the social assistance system to improve efficiency and reduce fraud. The government also began the process of hiring new specialists in the areas of children’s rights and child protection as a part of this program, with a target to hire 300 such specialists by the end of 2026.
Decent Work Country Program (2021–2024): ILO program that aims to gather statistics on the prevalence of child labor, build the capacity of the State Labor Inspectorate, and eliminate labor exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors. In 2024, as part of this program, the ILO and the Government of Moldova implemented a project to increase disadvantaged groups’ access to employment, particularly among rural and youth populations, as well as decrease informal employment.
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. This shelter remained active during the reporting period.

‡ 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.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports