

Croatia

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Croatia has supported the establishment of the National Council for Children, a group of state and local institutions that promote general children's rights issues.⁷¹⁷ Several nongovernmental organizations are actively assisting children and ethnic minorities who were displaced or otherwise affected by the regional armed conflict in the early 1990s. UNICEF has education programs to improve curricula; train teachers; and address ethnic intolerance—which may affect children's school attendance, particularly in areas where Bosnian or Serbian refugees are returning home.⁷¹⁸ In addition, the government signed a trans-border crime agreement as part of an effort to prevent trafficking, and IOM is working in Croatia to research the current trafficking situation and raise awareness about the issue.⁷¹⁹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Croatia are unavailable. According to government officials, only a small number of children between ages 15 and 18 are employed, mainly in the textile and maritime industries.⁷²⁰ Reports indicate that Croatia is primarily a transit country but also an origin and destination country for trafficking women and children for prostitution.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁷ UNICEF, *2000 Consolidated Report for Southeast Europe* [hereinafter *Consolidated Report for Southeast Europe*], 78, at <http://www.unicef.org> on 10/1/01.

⁷¹⁸ UNICEF is also working to improve the national capacity to monitor children's rights and to increase government allocations for child social services and child protection. See *Consolidated Report for Southeast Europe* at 78.

⁷¹⁹ The Croatian government signed the Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Trans-border Crime with the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative. IOM is operating a regional program with a branch in Croatia. The specific goals of the IOM program are to conduct research into the problem of trafficking, raise public awareness of the issue, and hold capacity-building programs for police and potential law enforcers. See UNICEF, *Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeastern Europe*, August 15, 2000, and IOM, *IOM Counter Trafficking Strategy for the Balkans and Neighboring Countries*, January 2001. The Ministry of Labour and Welfare has also stated that an initiative was launched in 2000 to make a plan of action to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. See Swedish International Development Agency, *Looking Back, Thinking Forward: The Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action Adopted at the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, 28 August 1996, for 1999-2000*, 125.

⁷²⁰ "Regulation of Child Labor in the Republic of Croatia," 1998 Public Hearing on Child Labor (Washington, D.C.: USDOL, 1998) [hereinafter "Regulation of Child Labor"].

⁷²¹ *The Protection Project Database: Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Women and Children: Croatia* at <http://www.protectionproject.org>. See also UNICEF, *Trafficking In Human Beings in Southeastern Europe*, August 15, 2000, and UNESCO, *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective*, E/CN.4/2000/68, February 2000.

Education is free and compulsory through grade eight.⁷²² Children generally finish compulsory education at age 14, but the minimum age for employment is 15.⁷²³ In 1996, the gross primary enrollment rate was 87.1 percent, and in 1994, the net primary enrollment rate was 82.3 percent.⁷²⁴ Primary school attendance is lower among ethnic Roma, many of who do not go to school at all, or drop out around the second or third grade.⁷²⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 15, and children between ages 15 and 18 may only work with written permission from a legal guardian.⁷²⁶ According to stipulations in the Labor Law and the Occupational Safety and Health Act, children under age 18 are prohibited from working overtime, at night, under dangerous labor conditions, or in any other job that may be harmful to a child's health, morality, or development.⁷²⁷ The Constitution prohibits forced or bonded labor, including labor by children.⁷²⁸ Article 175 of the Criminal Code prohibits slavery and the transport of slaves; Article 178 outlaws international prostitution, including solicitation of a minor; and Article 195 prohibits procurement of minors for sexual purposes. Penalties range from 6 months to 5 years in prison, or 10 years for crimes against minors.⁷²⁹ Croatia ratified ILO Convention 138 on October 8, 1991, and ILO Convention 182 on July 17, 2001.⁷³⁰

⁷²² *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Croatia* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, 2000) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 5, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/index.cfm?docid=716>.

⁷²³ *Ibid.* at Section 6d.

⁷²⁴ *World Development Indicators 2001*, Washington, D.C., 2001 [CD-ROM].

⁷²⁵ While the 1991 Government Census counted 6,700 ethnic Roma in Croatia, government and nongovernmental officials agree that the true number of Roma may be 30,000 to 40,000. Ethnic Roma face discrimination, particularly in the labor market and in schools. See Savelina Danova and Ruman Russinov, "Field Report: The ERRC in Croatia," *European Roma Rights Center* (summer 1998), at http://www.errc.org/rr_sum1998/field_report.shtml on 10/1/01. See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

⁷²⁶ Children under age 15 may work or participate in artistic or entertainment functions (such as making movies) with special permission from the parent or guardian and the labor inspector, assuming that the work is not harmful to the child's health, morality, education, or development. See Croatia Labor Law (1996), Articles 14 and 15, as cited in "Regulation of Child Labor."

⁷²⁷ Occupational Safety and Health Act, Article 40, as cited in Davor Stier, Embassy of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Ministry of Labor, letter, October 10, 2000 [letter on file]. The list of "harmful activities" is determined by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, in concert with the Ministry of Health. In general, all labor provisions are enforced by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. See Croatia Labor Law (1996), Articles 16 and 40, as cited in "Regulation of Child Labor."

⁷²⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Article 23, at <http://www.vlada.hr/english/docs-constitution.html> on 10/1/01.

⁷²⁹ See Protection Project Database at <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

⁷³⁰ ILOLEX database at <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english> on 10/1/01.