

*Committee: Human Rights Council (UNHRC)*

*Topic : Child Labour*

*Country: Hungary*

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Among the most provocative labor abuse forms exists the forced labor. Forced labor acquires different aspects, including trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of modern slavery. Child labor is a complicated problem since numerous factors determine whether children work or not. Poverty emerges as the most compelling reason why children work, without being the only cause of this phenomenon.

International accords prohibiting child labour are also in force in Hungary. Employers employing minors despite legal prohibition can be fined even for HUF several million, but this is not sufficient to eliminate the problem and the causes making children to take up jobs. The cooperation of all the respective organs would be necessary which would include communication among authorities. The role of child welfare services and other organs appointed for the protection of children is outstanding because it is their task to perceive, signalise and explore conditions that would lead to the employment of children. In case the cause of the employment of children is a situation of financial difficulty and social exposure it may mean a proper protection of a child if the family is supported by the means of social provision.

Though according to public perception there is no child labour at all in Hungary, or it occurs only in some conspicuous cases, yet one can regularly meet children distributing leaflets, working at harvest and doing other seasonal jobs, or washing windscreens at road crossings, and even begging. These activities, however, are not regarded as work by the society, and the children themselves mostly do not experience it as exploitation: they see a possibility of earning money if they go to work instead of attending school.

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Hungary are unavailable. There is little evidence of child labor in the formal sector. Children work as beggars in urban areas, and also as prostitutes, according to Budapest Police, although the scope of the problem is unknown. Hungary is primarily a transit country, but also a source and destination country, for trafficking in persons, including children. Trafficking in persons occurs from Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Russia, and the Balkans to and through Hungary to Western Europe and the United States for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.

The Labor Code of 1992 states that children may only be employed when they have finished their compulsory education, which effectively sets the minimum age for work at 16 years. However, children who are at least 14 years old are permitted to work if the work does not interfere with schooling or if they are exempt from attending school. All children under age 16 must obtain the consent of a legal guardian before entering into an employment contract. The Labor Code specifically prohibits children under the age of 18 from working in jobs that may be detrimental to

their physical well-being or development, in night work, or in overtime work. Forced labor is prohibited by law. The 1999 Act of Offenses prohibits persuading or soliciting another to engage in prostitution is illegal, and working in a brothel under the age of 18. The punishment is two to eight years imprisonment. The Criminal Code prohibits trafficking, as well as preparation for trafficking of persons, and has provisions against kidnapping and violations of personal freedom and smuggling of persons.

The National Work Safety and Labor Affairs Supervision Office (OMMF) has 20 county and local offices to enforce the labor code, including provisions related to child labor. OMMF inspectors respond to complaints and conduct random spot checks to ensure that employers adhere to labor regulations. Complex labor violations may be presented to the labor courts. Violations of labor regulations are misdemeanors punishable by a fine ranging from approximately USD 160 to 9,000. Child labor laws are reported to be enforced. The Criminal Code establishes a punishment for trafficking violations of up to 10 years imprisonment when minors are involved. In 2002, the Hungarian Ministry of Interior and Office of Interpol reported 34 arrests in trafficking cases, and prosecutors brought legal proceedings in 30 cases. Taking all these important issues into account, when we compare with other countries, Hungary provides the protection and protects the child rights.