

[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Youth & Education](#)[About State Department](#)

Netherlands, The

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2005](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 8, 2006

The Netherlands, with a population of approximately 16.3 million, is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliamentary legislative system. Parliamentary elections, most recently held in January 2003, were free and fair. A prime minister and a cabinet representing the governing political parties (traditionally a coalition of at least two major parties) exercise executive authority. The civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of addressing individual instances of abuse. The following human rights problems were reported:

- societal discrimination and violence against some religious and ethnic minorities
- violence against women and children
- trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation.

Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles are two autonomous countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; they also feature parliamentary systems and full constitutional protection of human rights. In practice, respect for human rights in these islands generally was the same as in the European Netherlands; however, the islands' prison conditions remained substandard.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

There were incidents of rightwing and racist violence against religious and ethnic minorities (see section 2.c.).

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions in the country generally met international standards, and the government permitted visits by independent human rights observers.

Several persons died possibly due to negligence in a fire at a detention center for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers.

During the year, the governments of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba continued to improve prison staffing and capacity to address concerns by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Both governments took steps to alleviate overcrowding. They increased cell capacity at the Bon Futuro prison in Curacao and introduced a pilot project on home arrest for selected prison inmates. New women's and juvenile sections opened at the correctional institute Aruba while the detention center in Bonaire was renovated and placed under the supervision of the Netherlands Antilles Prison Service. Despite these improvements, problems remain. On Curacao, several stabbings and shootings took place among rival gang members in the Bon Futuro prison, while several inmates escaped. In St. Maarten, illegal immigrants held a hunger strike because they were not repatriated in a reasonable amount of time. The government of the

Netherlands continued to provide assistance to improve prison conditions and management.

The governments of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba permitted access by independent human rights observers to prisons; however, no such visits occurred during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions in practice.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Regional police forces have primary responsibility for maintaining internal security. The royal constabulary and investigative organizations also have specified responsibilities for internal and external security. The police were generally effective, conducting their investigations in a professional manner. There were no indications of systematic police corruption, although there were reports of corruption with the customs and police officers at Schiphol airport (see section 3).

Arrest and Detention

Police officers, acting under the authority of the public prosecutor, conduct criminal investigations. A prosecutor or senior police officer must order arrests. Police officers may question suspects for a maximum of 12 hours and may detain a suspect for up to 6 days upon an order of the public prosecutor. Detainees are promptly informed of the charges against them. Detainees must be brought before an examining magistrate within 4 days. The magistrate subsequently checks the validity of continued detention every 30 days depending on progress in the preliminary investigation. The authorities respected these rights in practice. If the prosecutor believes an investigation is necessary, he must request a preliminary judicial inquiry from the investigative judge, who then assumes responsibility over the investigation. Defense attorneys have the right to be present during any questioning. There is no provision for bail.

There were no reports of political detainees.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected this provision in practice.

The judicial system is based on the Napoleonic Code. A pyramidal system of cantonal, district, and appellate courts handles both criminal and civil cases. The supreme court acts as the highest appellate court and ensures the uniform interpretation of the law.

Trial Procedures

Trials are public, but the judicial system does not provide for jury trials. The law requires that defendants be informed fully at every stage of criminal proceedings. In criminal trials, the law provides the right to prompt access to counsel (virtually free for low-income persons), for a presumption of innocence, and to appeal. The government respected these rights in practice.

Political Prisoners

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice and did not restrict academic freedom. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to ensure freedom of speech and of the press.

In December an appellate court cited the importance of safeguarding the right to freedom of speech in overruling a lower court's decision to fine a person who called a Rotterdam local council member "just about the biggest neo-Nazi in Dutch politics." The decision came only a few weeks after a court prohibited authorities from removing banners accusing Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk of complicity in the deaths of 11 people in a fire at a detention center in Schiphol airport (see section 1.c.).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice. The constitution states, "the law may set rules for the exercise of the right to religion or conviction outside buildings and closed places for the protection of health, in the interest of traffic and for the purpose of countering or preventing disorder." In practice, this article is rarely if ever invoked.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Latent tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities were aggravated by the November 2004 murder of the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh--whose work had been criticized as anti-Islamic--by a Dutch-born member of a radical Islamic group. In late 2004 and during the early part of the year, the killing triggered multiple reported instances of violence against Islamic institutions and mosques, reprisals against churches, and clashes between Muslim and other youth, who identified themselves as "native Dutch." The Pew Foundation global attitudes project noted that 88 percent of citizens regarded Islam as violent; 76 percent were concerned about Islamic extremism; and 55 percent had an unfavorable view of Muslims.

The number of Muslims in the country increased significantly in the past two decades. By 2004, 945 thousand Muslims, constituting 5.8 percent of the total population, lived in the country, primarily in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague.

Muslims faced criticism based on a number of popularly held perceptions, including they were poorly integrated into society and Muslim youth were disproportionately prone to criminal activity. They are also criticized for the conservative views of orthodox Muslims on topics such as women, homosexuals, and corporal punishment. A number of outspoken politicians, mainly on the right, openly argued that Islam itself is incompatible with the country's traditions and social values. The result was growing animosity between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and more open and frequent discrimination against Muslims, particularly in social and work settings. Anecdotal evidence suggested that Muslims had a harder time finding employment in the private and public sectors, were more prone to be refused housing, and were more frequently banned from entering nightclubs and similar establishments than non-Muslim Dutch. Reports of Muslims encountering unprovoked verbal and even physical abuse increased. In response the government launched a comprehensive outreach campaign to counter anti-Muslim sentiments.

Anti-Semitism was a problem. According to government statistics, the country has a population of approximately 45 thousand Jews, less than a quarter of whom belong to active Jewish organizations. In June the Anti-Defamation League reported that one in five citizens embraced stereotypical prejudices about Jews. Moreover, certain groups opposed to Israeli policies in the occupied territories used seemingly anti-Semitic language and images to express political views. Explicitly anti-Semitic sentiments also prevailed among fringe Nationalist and neo-Nazi groups, as well as among some elements within the Muslim community.

Between January 2004 and May, the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) registered 326 anti-Semitic incidents, compared to 334 in 2003 and 359 in 2002. The number of serious incidents, such as physical violence, threats of violence, and desecration of cemeteries and synagogues, remained roughly the same. CIDI criticized the police and public prosecutors offices for failing to give sufficient priority to investigating and prosecuting anti-Semitic incidents.

CIDI also expressed concern about the rising number of anti-Semitic incidents at schools. Anti-Semitic views were especially prevalent among students of North African descent.

The government repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism and had a comprehensive action plan to combat discrimination. The Ministry of Education reminded schools about longstanding guidelines prescribing the teaching of different religions and ideologies in conjunction with combating discrimination and intolerance. The Ministry of Welfare subsidized a special program to teach children about the Second World War and the persecution of Jewish persons. The government sought to promote dialogue and supported initiatives that aimed to create a better understanding between Jews and Muslims. The Anne Frank Foundation published a book, *Fifty Questions on Anti-Semitism*, primarily intended for teachers in dealing with Muslim students. Nonetheless, CIDI suggested that the government spend more time and money creating a safe environment at schools and teaching respect for the different cultural and social backgrounds of students. CIDI also called on the government to restrict the incitement of hate through the media, including cracking down on anti-Semitic and racist Internet sites.

The Jewish community has an umbrella group, the Central Jewish Consultation, which represents the community's interests in discussions with the government.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2005 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not employ it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice, the government provided some protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution; however, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) alleged that the government returned asylum seekers, particularly those from Iraq, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to countries where the security situation was sufficiently unstable that their safety could not be guaranteed. In December Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk acknowledged publicly that the Immigration and Naturalization Service had mistakenly reported the asylum status of some screened-out asylum seekers to DRC authorities. The government granted refugee status or asylum.

The government generally cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

Individuals are not granted asylum if they come from a so-called safe country of origin or stayed for some time in a safe country of transit. The government does not grant asylum to economic migrants and illegal immigrants who cannot demonstrate a credible fear of persecution. Those who were denied asylum and chose to return voluntarily were provided economic assistance.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. These constitutional rights also apply to the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

Elections and Political Participation

Parliamentary elections, last held in January 2003, were free and fair.

There were 60 women in the 150-seat second chamber of parliament, and there were 5 women in the 16-member cabinet. By court order, the government was prohibited from subsidizing the orthodox Protestant SGP party, which does not grant equal rights to women on theological grounds. Women also held positions in the parliaments and cabinets of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

There were approximately 15 members of ethnic minorities--Turkish, Moroccan, Iranian, Surinamese, and Somali--in the 150-seat second chamber of parliament, although there were no ethnic minority political parties or movements specifically represented in parliament. There were no members of ethnic minorities in the 16-member cabinet.

Government Corruption and Transparency

There were reports of corruption within the government. In August the justice ministry's scientific investigation and documentation center (WODC), reported that every year there were approximately 130 internal investigations into corruption within the public administration. Of these investigations, approximately 50 are handed over to the police or public prosecutor's office and resulted in several prosecutions and approximately five convictions a year. Although there were allegations in 2004 of corruption of customs and police officers at Schiphol airport, no indictments were subsequently issued.

The law provides for public access to government information, and generally respects that right to citizens and noncitizens. Disputes occasionally arise in court over the scope of the government's nondisclosure entitlement for public interest reasons. For example, there were disputes as to whether classified internal memos should be released.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Several domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were very cooperative and responsive to their views.

The government has a long tradition of hosting international legal tribunals, including the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and the headquarters of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, political preference, sexual orientation, and social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions. However, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against ethnic minorities were problems.

Women

Domestic violence was the most prevalent form of violence in society. According to a June justice ministry fact sheet, more than 40 percent of the population has experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. Of these, 10 percent reportedly experienced some form of physical, sexual, or mental violence on a daily or weekly basis. According to police records, some 80 percent of victims were women. The police estimated that only approximately 12 percent of cases were actually reported to the police. Spousal abuse carries a penalty one-third greater than ordinary battery. In 2004 approximately 800 men were prosecuted for beating their partners.

In January the TransAct organization became the national office for providing support to victims of domestic violence and those investigating and prosecuting such crimes. TransAct organized meetings of the national network on domestic violence, set up databases, and gathered examples of best model practices. The government subsidized shelters for battered women.

Rape, including spousal rape, is a criminal offense, and the government effectively prosecuted those accused of such crimes. Approximately 15 thousand rapes and sexual assaults were committed each year. The penalty for rape is imprisonment not exceeding 15 years and/or a fine. The maximum sentence for marital rape is eight years' imprisonment. Some rape victims may be given protection in government-subsidized shelters for battered women. Police officially registered 1,774 rape cases in 2004, an increase from 1,665 in 2003.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is prohibited; however, a March report by the special FGM committee estimated that FGM was performed in the country on at least 50 girls each year.

Prostitution is legal for persons who are at least 18 years of age and engage in the work voluntarily; however, the law penalizes forms of organized prostitution involving force, violence, misuse of power, and deception. The government has strict licensing standards for brothels to ensure decent working conditions and health care for prostitutes, while prohibiting the employment of minors and illegal immigrants and making prostitution less susceptible to criminal organizations. There were approximately 25 thousand prostitutes; roughly two-thirds were from non-European Union countries.

Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking)

The law requires employers to take measures to protect workers from sexual harassment; however, a 2003 study showed that 5.3 percent of female workers were sexually intimidated in the workplace. The government funded an ongoing public awareness campaign and has taken measures to counter harassment among civil servants.

Under the law, women enjoy the same rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system.

Although roughly 54 percent of women worked, nearly two-thirds did so part-time. Traditional cultural factors and an inadequate number of daycare facilities discouraged many women from working full time. Female and male unemployment were, respectively, 7.3 and 5.3 percent. The social affairs ministry reported that women often were underemployed, had less chance of promotion, and held lower level positions than men, primarily because of their part-time work status. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, women working in the private sector on average earned 23 percent less than men, although, when adjusted for level of experience and expertise required for the jobs, this differential fell to 7 percent.

The government provided affirmative action programs for women, and collective labor agreements usually included provisions to strengthen the position of women. An equal treatment commission investigated complaints of discrimination against women.

Children

The government worked to ensure the well being of children through numerous well-funded health, education, and public information programs.

Education was free and compulsory for children between the ages of 4 and 16, although schools could ask for a voluntary contribution from parents. Vocational education was also free, except for the cost of books and materials. Approximately 10 percent of students left secondary school before attaining a certificate. Government-licensed Islamic schools were obliged to follow the same curriculum requirements as other schools. One in 10 immigrant children left school without obtaining a diploma.

The government subsidizes health care, and boys and girls have equal access.

Child abuse was a problem. In a February report the special child abuse commissioner for youth policy concluded that as many as 100 thousand children were victims of abuse. Approximately 50 to 80 children are believed to die each year from some form of abuse. More than 30 thousand formal reports of child abuse were registered in 2004, 24 percent higher than in 2002. Due to the high volume of reports, there were long waiting lists for assistance, but the government reduced these waiting lists by increasing funding to the Council for the Protection of Children.

The law provides for the prosecution of sexual abusers of children between the ages of 12 and 16 without requiring that affected parties file a complaint. Under the law, citizens and noncitizen permanent residents who abused minor children abroad could be tried and convicted in the country, even if the offense is not a crime in the country in which it occurred. In May the Arnhem court convicted five men, accused of having organized trips to Tunisia for sex with minors, of participating in a criminal organization, and committing crimes against morals. The men received prison sentences from 1 to 3.5 years.

The maximum penalty for the distribution of child pornography is six years' imprisonment, and the government continued its campaign against child pornography on the Internet. The child pornography reporting center and the national police reported 6,322 cases of Internet child pornography in 2004, compared with six thousand reports in 2003. In 2004 more than 60 child pornography cases were prosecuted, compared with 100 in 2003.

Trafficking of girls for sexual exploitation was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking).

Trafficking in Persons

The law criminalizes trafficking in persons; however, trafficking in persons was a problem.

On January 1 legislation came into effect, which increases the maximum sentence for trafficking in persons to 12 years' imprisonment in case of serious physical injury and 15 years' imprisonment in case of death. The law also expands the definition of trafficking in persons to include labor trafficking. The law prohibits the employment of prostitutes under the age of 18.

Prosecutors opened approximately 220 trafficking cases in 2004, compared with 187 cases in 2003. In January the Lelystad court convicted two individuals of having kidnapped, raped, abused, and trafficked three African asylum seekers and sentenced one suspect to 14 years' and the other to 10 years' imprisonment. In April police arrested 18 men suspected of having trafficked Russian and Bulgarian girls. In December the Almelo court sentenced two Moroccan "lover boys" and two accomplices to prison for two to approximately six years for having lured two young women into prostitution. The court ordered the procurers to pay each victim \$6 thousand (5 thousand euros) in damages.

During the year, the following 2004 pending trafficking cases were resolved. The leader of a group of five persons arrested in May 2004 for having forced African women to work as prostitutes and act in pornographic videos was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. Each of the four accomplices received sentences of between 5- and 10-years' imprisonment. Three persons charged in June 2004 with trafficking East European women were each punished with two to three years' imprisonment. The Hague court sentenced six person arrested in July 2004 for sex trafficking to imprisonment for terms ranging from one to six years. The Alkmaar Court verdict for the owner of an escort service arrested in July 2004 on suspicion of having exploited minors was still pending at year's end.

The government, in particular the ministries of justice, internal affairs, foreign affairs, welfare and health, and social affairs, actively combated trafficking in persons. Local police forces established special units to deal with trafficking, and a 500-person national police team focused exclusively on trafficking investigations and provided specialized training to police in the identification and protection of possible trafficking victims. The national rapporteur on trafficking in persons, an independent, publicly funded agency, reported annually to the government on the nature, extent, and mechanisms of trafficking as well as on the effects of national policies. Authorities participated in international investigations and cooperated closely with other governments on trafficking.

The country was a destination and transit point for trafficked persons. NGOs and the police estimated that the number of women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation ranged from 1,000 to 3,600. The Foundation against Trafficking in Women (STV) registered 405 victims in 2004, of whom 126 came from Central and Eastern Europe; lesser numbers came from African countries, primarily Nigeria, Cameroon, and Morocco, and from South America. Of the 405 victims registered in 2004, approximately 26 were under age 18. In the first eight months of the year, STV registered 252 trafficking victims.

Trafficking within the country was also a problem. Of the 405 trafficking victims registered in 2004, 51 were living in the country at the time they were seduced into prostitution by so-called lover boys, primarily young Moroccan or Turkish men and boys. The victims were young, mostly immigrant women. In January the government set up the national expertise center for youth prostitution to collect figures, background information, and the best practices in fighting youth prostitution and lover boys. Various organizations and local governments initiated specific assistance and prevention programs for potential victims of "lover boys."

Most traffickers used threats of violence to the victim, or to the victim's family, to control their victims. Underage girls and young women of Moroccan and Turkish descent (mostly lover boy victims), underage asylum seekers, women with a dependent residence status (pseudo marriage), and women recruited in Africa were most vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking.

The government and NGOs believe that trafficking for labor occurs, but had not compiled statistics on this phenomenon at year's end.

Under the law, illegal residents, who may have been victims of trafficking, may not be deported before investigations are completed. Victims are allowed three months to consider pressing charges, and victims who did so were allowed to stay in the country and to work until the judicial process was completed.

The government subsidized NGOs working with trafficking victims, including the STV, an independent organization offering social support, legal advice, medical aid, shelters, and counseling to victims.

The justice ministry co-financed the La Strada program, aimed at preventing trafficking in women in Central and East European countries. Other prevention initiatives included the travel agents' association distribution of warnings about trafficking and sex with minors and public awareness campaigns aimed at tourists and travel agencies meant to deter sexual exploitation of children.

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides for the protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services, and there were no reports that such discrimination occurred. The law requires access to public buildings for persons with disabilities, but public buildings and public transport often were not easily accessible in practice.

The Equal Treatment Committee received a few dozen complaints from persons with disabilities most of which were related to labor issues.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 20 percent of the population (3 million persons) is of foreign origin, including 1.7 million who belong to ethnic minority groups, principally Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean.

Incidents of physical assault against minorities were rare, but members of minority groups were subjected to verbal abuse and intimidation and were denied access to public venues, such as discotheques. The Muslim community, including 365 thousand of Turkish descent and 315 thousand of Moroccan descent, faced increased discrimination (see section 2.c.).

Members of immigrant groups faced discrimination in housing and employment. The minority unemployment rate remained roughly three times that of the ethnic Dutch workforce.

With the proliferation of Internet Web sites, the dissemination of racial and discriminatory material increased. The Discrimination on the Internet Registration Center registered a sharp increase in reported incidents, from approximately 1,200 in 2003 to more than 1,800 in 2004. Increases occurred in all categories, particularly discrimination against Moroccans, Turks, Islam, native Dutch, and homosexuals.

The government pursued an active campaign to increase public awareness of racism and discrimination. Civil and criminal courts, the equal opportunities committee, the national ombudsman, the commercial code council, as well as the council for journalism, the European Court of Justice, and the European Court of Human Rights addressed complaints about racism and discrimination. The majority of criminal cases concerned racist defamation. Civil lawsuits often concern discrimination in the supply of services, such as supplemental conditions for non-ethnic Dutch persons to obtain a mobile phone or to gain access to clubs. The equal opportunities committee primarily addresses incidents of discrimination in the labor market, including discrimination on the work floor, unequal pay, termination of labor contracts, and preferential treatment of ethnic Dutch employees.

The prosecutor's office also has established a national expertise center on discrimination that collects information, maintains a database on cases, and provides courses to prosecutors handling cases of discrimination. In 2003 the government-sponsored national association of anti-discrimination bureaus registered approximately 36 hundred complaints, two-thirds of which were based on racial discrimination.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Homosexuals faced increasing harassment in the larger cities, primarily from pockets of Muslim youth. Harassment consisted largely of verbal epithets and abuse.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Workers are entitled to form or join unions of their own choosing without prior government authorization, and workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 25 percent of the work force was unionized.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protected this right in practice. The law provides for the right to organize, and specific laws provide for the right to collective bargaining; workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 86 percent of workers were covered by collective bargaining agreements. The law provides for the right to strike, and workers exercised this right by conducting legal strikes, except for some civil servants, who have other institutionalized means of protection and redress. There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred (see section 5).

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The government effectively enforced laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace. The minimum age for employment is 16 years. Those in school at the age of 16 may not work more than 8 hours per week. The law prohibits persons under the age of 18 from working overtime, at night, or in areas dangerous to their physical or mental well-being. The tripartite labor commission, which monitored hiring practices and conducts inspections, enforced these laws effectively.

Holiday work and after school jobs are subject to very strict rules set by law. The social ministry's labor inspection office oversaw observance of the rules. In 2004 labor inspections found that 28 percent of companies violated the regulations applying to holiday work, including by employing children under the age of 13.

Trafficking of children occurred (see section 5).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The minimum wage for adults of approximately \$1,517 (1,264 euros) per month provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The Labor Inspectorate effectively enforced the minimum wage.

The law sets a 40-hour workweek. The average workweek was 30.6 hours (38.7 hours for full-time and 20 hours for part-time workers). Anyone working more than 4.5 hours per day was entitled to a 30-minute rest period. Overtime is regulated. There are no exceptions for legal foreign workers. The Labor Inspectorate effectively enforced the labor laws.

Working conditions, including comprehensive occupational safety and health standards set by law, were monitored actively and enforced effectively by the tripartite labor commission. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs also monitored standards through its labor inspectorate. Workers could remove themselves from dangerous work conditions without jeopardizing their continued employment, and workers exercised this right in practice.

Members of immigrant groups faced discrimination in employment (see section 5).

[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[FOIA](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)

