

In the MAINSTREAM

1. Efforts to Improve Women's Rights in R. Macedonia:

Improvement of Working Conditions for Women

The campaign entitled "Improvement of Working Conditions for Women", which will take place during 2005, was promoted in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia on December 23, 2004. The campaign was started in order to address the poor working conditions that women face in many occupations and will consist of a number of group and individual activities of NGOs, political organizations, institutions, media, experts, and the public.

The purpose of the campaign will be to locate problems, making them visible and to help their resolution, trying to improve the existing legislation. The campaign initiators are: Women Parliamentarians Caucus, Macedonian Women's Lobby and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy - Department of Gender Equality.

Regulation of Maternity and Parental Rights

The proposed shortening of maternity leave was the topic of the round table organized by the Macedonian Women's Lobby (MWL) in cooperation with the Women's Section of the Macedonian Independent Association of Trade Unions and the Pediatricians' Union. The proposal, publicly expressed by the Union of Chambers of Commerce of the Republic of Macedonia and the Employers Association asked for shortening the duration of maternity leave from 9 to 3 months. The round table took place on January 28th in the Club of Parliamentarians. The list of about 80 participants included Stevco Jakimovski, Minister of Labor and Social Policy, women MP's, representatives of the Doctors' Association, Macedonian Women's Lobby members and members of other women's NGOs.

Given that many EU and SEE countries are increasing their parental leave, participants stated that reducing maternity leave means reducing women's rights. Participants further elaborated that rights of women-mothers to be with their children and to take care of them are fundamental rights. UNICEF's recommendation about the importance of breast-feeding for a healthy new generation was also discussed. The participants concluded that the duration of maternity leave as a minimum should remain 9 months, with possibilities for improvement with different modifications in the future. They also asked that representatives from MWL and other co-organizers of the round table should be included in the working group on changes to the Law on Employment.

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Participation of Women in the Local Elections 2005

Promoting the agenda for more women in local government, the Macedonian Women's

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3. New Family Law Adopted in Serbia
4. GTF Conference on "Work and pregnancy" Sarajevo, January 26th

