

## *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 co-operation 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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

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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.

### *Participation of Women in the Local Elections 2005*

Promoting the agenda for more women in local government, the Macedonian Women's Lobby (WML), in co-operation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy - Department of Gender Equality, Women Parliamentarians' Caucus and Union of Women's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia (UWOM) held a press conference which took place on January 18<sup>th</sup> in the Parliamentarians Club. The speakers reminded political parties to respect their obligation by Law to have 30% women on their candidates' lists in the following 2005 local elections. Stressing that in spite of the 30% provision, the outcome of the elections can still be devastating for women if they are not adequately distributed on the lists, participants demanded that one woman should be amongst the first 3 positions on every candidates list for local elections. Also, every political party was asked to nominate at least one woman for mayor where that party has a good chance of winning.

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## **2. Eight-episode TV Documentary About Women and Society in Serbia**

On February 6<sup>th</sup> Radio-television Serbia (RTS) broadcasted the first episode of a TV documentary series about women and society "Zrno postovanja" ("*A little respect*"). The topic of the first episode was violence against women which was discussed by experts in the field, women NGO activists and women victims of family violence. It also featured a story about the only women prison in Serbia, Pozarevac, with the confession of the woman who, after being a victim of family violence, subsequently committed the crime herself.

Eight 30-minute episodes will cover the subjects of violence against women, women and the economy, women and politics, women's health, women and trafficking, women and media, women and education, and position of Roma women in Serbia. The logistic support for the project was provided by representatives of Serbia in SP GTF.

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## **3. New Family Law Adopted in Serbia**

In Serbia, a new Family Law has been adopted which will come in effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. The Law provides measures for protection from family violence, which should prevent the violator to repeat the violent act, and in such a manner it should protect the physical and mental health of the victim, family member. This should provide protection under Civil Law, and not only by Penal Code as before, while Penal Code will still cover the criminal responsibility under Article 118a.

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## **4. GTF Conference on "Work and pregnancy",**

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, January 26<sup>th</sup>

As a final activity in the SP GTF regional project "Social Dialogue and Empowerment of Women in Trade Unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro", a thematic conference entitled "Work and pregnancy" was held on January 26<sup>th</sup> in Sarajevo. The participants of the conference were representatives of authorities of both entities, Trade Union branches, national and entity parliamentarians, representatives of parliamentary commissions for gender equality, public funds, NGO's and media.

After a comprehensive examination of issues that workers with high risk pregnancy face, participants adopted a list of recommendations, aimed both at legislation and practice, which would strengthen pregnant women's rights and improve their position in the labor market and health care system. *Inter alia*, the conclusions sought definition of the term "risk pregnancy" and its criteria, specifying the treatment of risk pregnancy and including all the necessary medicaments to the essential list of medicines. Also, participants sought that an Action Plan for promotion of women's health on the state level should be created. The conclusions also asked for legislative definition of special working conditions for pregnant women in the workplace, as well as explicit prohibition of discrimination in Labor Laws, especially in issues like dismissal of pregnant women and duration of maternity leave.

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