

Anti-Discrimination Center "Memorial"

Lists of professions banned for women were taken from Soviet legislation, they exist in the majority of Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries of the former USSR. The main explanation for such restrictions is protection of women reproductive function. However, such prohibition is influencing women's life meaning economical situation, freedom of independent decisions on maternity issue and professional fulfillment. Such "protective" measures became excessive and go beyond strict maternity protection infringing the rights of all women in spite of their ability and wish to give birth. 2 years ago, ADC Memorial launched a campaign #Alljobsforallwomen to eliminate discriminative acts that prohibit employment of women in hundreds jobs, including well paid and desirable ones.

We are pleased to note that Ukraine and recently Uzbekistan canceled professional bans for women, while Kazakhstan and Russia reviewed the lists and shortened them for several spheres. Dozens jobs in such an important sphere as transportation will be available for women in Russia already in January 2021. ADC Memorial welcomes the first successes for Russian women who have triumphed in the fight to have bans on their professions revoked. They will be able to work on already chosen jobs as truck drivers, machinists, sailors on ships, and printing workers. Trade unions and huge transportation companies also supported women as they would like to see them among their workers. In 2018, Russian Railways, the largest railway transportation company in Russia, came out in favor of allowing women to work in this industry. Just recently The Moscow Metro reported that from January 2021 it will start recruiting women as subway train drivers, and due to the large number of job seekers, a separate training group for women will be formed. First time not only in 21st century, but in history of modern-day Russia women will be hired to drive subway trains. ADC Memorial fully supports initiatives of employers and voices a hope that academic institutions will change the rules for accepting women for training in previously closed professions (including machinists, assistant engineers, bus and truck drivers, ship mechanics and motorists, sailors and others) in order they can actually start working in these positions in 2021.

The access to previously restricted spheres must be guaranteed in all countries that already canceled professional bans. Special measures should be taken to sufficiently promote jobs for women as well as to inform the recruitment departments that women are now eligible for positions like a metro operator and a bus driver that have been banned to them for decades.

Almost all countries of the region already received recommendations of several UN Committees to repeal discriminative professional bans for women, recognizing them as obsolete, and to cease taking measures of unnecessary care, to widen the equal access of women to chosen jobs and careers, as well as to combat widespread gender stereotypes on the role of women in society.

Welcoming steps made in several Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries on improvement of gender equality in employment, we would like to highlight the necessity of further reforms including changes of existing negative practices.