

SAAB and women NGOs meeting

On October 8, 2009 in Warsaw an evaluation meeting within the project “Labour Rights Protection from Gender Perspective in Super/Hypermarkets in Poland” took place. Meeting’s goals were:

- to collect and share information about projects achievements and changes in labour rights protection system of women employed in supermarkets,
- to prepare of a strategy for further activities aiming at improvement of the working conditions of women.

On the meeting people already involved in our activities were present: trade unions’ women leaders, representatives of NGOs, lawyers, experts dealing with working conditions issues from Central Institute for the Work Protection and Nofer Institute of the Occupational Medicine and a representative of National labour Inspectorate.

We have invited to discussion and cooperation persons and organisations, which already deal or would like to deal, similarly to KARAT, with:

- economic and social situation of women issues,
- monitoring of women employment situation,
- development of programs connected with labour market from gender perspective.

The meeting was opened by Magdalena Chustecka’s presentation “Work conditions and labour rights of women employed in supermarket chains in the face of an economic crisis”. Presentation was based on an article which describes current situation of employees and super/hypermarkets chains condition in context of present circumstances.

In the article author tries to answer on several important questions: is the retailers market hardly influenced by economic crisis? Is the global economic situation a smoke-screen for employment diminishing and keeping low level of salaries in super/hypermarkets? What are the working conditions of women employed in supermarkets in Poland nowadays? Are new legal solutions weakening or strengthening employees position and protection of rights?

2009-10-13

Conference on working conditions in supermarkets

On June 19, 2009 a conference: “Labour Rights of Women employed in Supermarkets – preventing infringements, protection, improvement of the working conditions” took place in Warsaw. It was the next event from a cycle of meetings organised within the project “Labour Rights Protection from Gender Perspective in Super/Hypermarkets in Poland”. The aim of the conference was to emphasis the poor working conditions offered by super/hypermarkets to their employees, in majority women, as well as ways of protecting labour rights and preventing the abuses and violations. It is especially important in times of economic crisis, when we observe in Poland that amendments to e.g. Labour Code, instead of strengthening, weaken the position of the most vulnerable groups of employees.

Several interesting papers were presented during the conference: “Assertion of claims on the ground of health detriment of women employed in supermarkets – occupational diseases and para-occupational diseases. Proposed amendments to legislation” by lawyers from Lech Obara legal office cooperating with Association of Persons Wronged by Big Supermarket Chains “Biedronka”, “NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ Mazowsze Region Trade Union experience in organising Jeronimo Martins Distribution company employees into trade union” by Edward Głębocki (NSZZ “S” TU’s Development Department), and “Results of National Labour Inspectorate controls in retail trade in 2008” by Stanisław Wójcik – Chief Specialist in the Inspeccion and Control Department. Within the debate about health issues related to work in supermarkets the participants could hear and discuss over the occupational diseases problems, risks of work and carry loads over work safety and hygiene norms and the risk of chronic tiredness (presentations: “Workload and subjective musculoskeletal system ailments of super/hypermarkets employees” by Dr . Alicja Bortkiewicz Senior Lecturer in work medicine, Nofer Institute; “Work of women in supermarkets and the risk of chronic tiredness. Causes, symptoms, consequences, prevention” by Dr. Zbigniew Obmiński, Endocrinology Dep. Sport Institute).

The conference was attended by e.g. representatives of trade unions, employers (Carrefour), labour law specialists, experts dealing with working conditions, representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Labour Inspectorate, Ombudsman Office and NGOs dealing with women issues or employees rights issues. The conference met as well great media interest.

The organization of the conference was supported by Open Society Institute and Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Papers from the conference (available in Polish only)/ Materiały pokonferencyjne (w języku polskim):

- Prezentacja Kontrole w placówkach handlu detalicznego, Stanisław Wójcik PIP
- Doświadczenia w organizowaniu pracownic i pracowników supermarketów J.M.D. "Biedronka" w związek zawodowy na terenie działania NSZZ "Solidarność" Region Mazowsze, Edward Głębocki NSZZ "Solidarność"
- Dochodzenie roszczeń z tytułu uszczerbku na zdrowiu kobiet pracujących w supermarketach – choroby zawodowe a tzw. choroby parazawodowe i roszczenia uzupełniające, proponowane zmiany w ustawodawstwie, radca prawny Lech Obara
- Obciążenie pracą i związane z tym dolegliwości u pracowników super- i hipermarketów, dr hab. n. med. Alicja Bortkiewicz Instytut Medycyny Pracy (referat)
- Prezentacja Alicji Bortkiewicz z Instytutu Medycyny Pracy
- Praca kobiet w supermarketach a ryzyko chronicznego zmęczenia (ChZ). Przyczyny, objawy, następstwa, zapobieganie, dr Zbigniew Obmiński Instytut Sportu w Warszawie

- Problematyka BHP w kontekście pracy kobiet w super- i hipermarketach. Studium porównawcze: wyniki kontroli PIP za 2008 r. a wyniki badań Koalicji KARAT, dr Barbara Krzyśków, Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy.

2009-06-23

Open Letter to Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak

On 3 March 2009 KARAT sent an open letter to Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak – Chairman of the Three-Sided Commission (government-employers-trade unions) regarding our recommendations to the amendments to the labour law. These recommendations serve the purpose of more effective protection of the employees rights. Recommendations are prepared by the experts cooperating with KARAT within the activities aiming at improvement of the working conditions in super/hypermarkets in Poland and more efficient employees' rights protection system from gender perspective. In our opinion, Three-Sided Commission, while working over new solutions regarding labour law, should take under consideration the needs of the most vulnerable groups, to which for sure belong women. It is also especially important to avoid the situation that, in times of global economic crisis, the regres in the field of the employees' rights will take place.

2009-03-05

Women's rights in supermarkets: Round Table

On 26 February 2009 within the project: Labour rights protection from gender perspective in super/hypermarkets in Poland, KARAT organised the Round Table. To the discussion regarding the improvement of the working conditions in supermarkets were invited: state institutions (parliamentarians, representatives of ministries, National Labour Inspectorate, Ombudsman Office), employers and employers' organisations, trade unions, NGOs, lawyers and researchers.

For the first time we invited to our debates and activities the representatives of super/hypermarket chains and employers' organisations. Our aim was to hear the employers' opinions about recommendations focusing on more effective protection of the employees' rights developed by KARAT's experts (SAAB) and find out what can be, realistically, done to improve the employees' situation.

Our recommendations and conclusions from the Round Table will be sent to Chairman of the Three-Sided Commission (government-employers-trade unions) – Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak.

2009-02-26

Seminar: Women labour rights protection in super/ hypermarkets in Poland

On January 15, 2009 KARAT Coalition held a seminar in Warsaw titled *Women's labour rights protection in super/ hypermarkets in Poland*. During the seminar the recommendations for the amendment to the law and its implementation aiming at elimination of the violations, identified by the research conducted earlier, were presented by the Strategic Action Advise Body (SAAB) experts.

The seminar was attended by the representatives of different trade unions active in the super/hyper markets, NGOs dealing with women issues or employees rights issues, labour law specialists, sociologists, and experts dealing with working conditions from Central Institute for the Work Protection, the Nofer Institute of the Occupational Medicine, the Institute of Labour and Social Studies. The participants also included representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Work Protection Council at the Parliament, the National Labour Inspectorate and Warsaw District Labour Inspectorate as well as the Ombudsman Office.

During the seminar the results of the research conducted in 2008 as well as the publication *Working conditions and labour rights protection from gender perspective in supermarkets in Poland* were presented. Recommendations developed out by the SAAB were presented and discussed in details.

Changes recommended by the SAAB, among others, are addressed to the period during which legal actions related to labour relations can be taken; extension of the period during which breaches of labour rights can be prosecuted up to 10 years; system of legal representation. The SAAB also recommended to strengthen barriers for obstructing the functioning of trade unions in supermarkets, more clear and transparent regulations of the labour contracts, changes in the manner the labour inspectors conduct controls in supermarkets. It is also necessary to develop a new model of defining and categorizing work related health problems and to develop standards for calculating sufficient number of employees for a given workload.

Till now the recommendations were past to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Work Protection Council at the Parliament, the National Labour Inspectorate.

2009-01-19

Workshops for employees' movements women leaders

On 23-24 October 2008 the KARAT Coalition has organised in Warsaw workshops for women leaders of employees' movements and trade unions operating in super/hyper markets in Poland. The aim of it was to activate women to cooperate and build alliances as well as to provide them with legal tools to improve working conditions in their working places.

On the first day the awareness rising training was realised. The participants were able to get knowledge about women's rights, stereotypes, gender and discrimination as well as to take part in exercises showing problems connected with these issues. The stress was laid on women in the labour market in Poland.

On the second day the effective tools for fighting against discrimination and employees' rights violations were given. Participants had the opportunity to get or to widen their

knowledge about labour law and employees' rights in context of the infringements identified and described by KARAT Coalition in the report from research "Situation of women **employed in super/hyper markets in Poland**". The information on how to monitor working conditions in working place like supermarket were provided as well.

Except the educational and awareness rising value these workshops had, it became also a platform of sharing experiences, problems employees meet on every day work, good practices worked out by different trade unions and employees' movements. New contacts were made and forms of cooperation within and between trade unions, between activists and other, not united, members of the supermarkets' staff and last but not least between employees movements and NGO's were proposed.

Workshops were organised within the project "Improvement of the working conditions of women employed in the super/hyper markets in Poland" supported by Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

2008-10-29

3rd SAAB meeting, 24 September 2008

On September 24, 2008 the third and in the same time final working meeting of the Strategic Action Advise Body (SAAB) took place in the KARAT's office.

During the meeting the SAAB members has developed several recommendations refering to:

- the existing law,
- the implementation of the labour law, focusing on the employees rights,
- the activities, competences and mechanisms of control of the National Labour Inspectorate and its inspectors,
- complex, horizontal and vertical, changes involving and dedicated to many partners.

The SAAB recommends for example:

- the prolongation of the period of claims expiration up to 5 years,
- the prolongation of the period of the labour rights violations' prosecution up to 10 years,
- the change regarding the overtime work – payment as the regular way of calculation for it, days off additionally, only after the suggestion of the employee,
- to suport, in a legal way, the creation and activities of the trade unions,
- the change of the job contracts' language to be more clear and easier to understand by the employees,
- to give the priority to job contracts for indefinite period,
- to rise national minimum salary,
- the controls of the Latour inspectors should be unexpected and thorough,
- the inspectors should more often use the precepts for payments in the situation when the employer does not want to pay for the overtime work,
- to be more effective in enforcing the proper safety trainings for the employees,
- employees' rights trainings for workers and managers, asertiveness and interpersonal trainings,

- trainings on CSR for employers and managers,
- to work out standards regarding the adaptation of the number of employees to the number of tasks they have.

These recommendations are examples of different changes and solutions that should be made/created to improve the working conditions of women employed in the super/hyper markets. They will be addressed to relevant decision makers: Ministry of Justice, Codification Commission of the Parliament, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Labour Inspectorate, Work Protection Council at the Parliament, as well as to supermarkets chains' owners.

It is especially worthy of notice that the involvement of all of the SAAB members into the development of the recommendations as well as to other project activities shows that the issues that the project focuses at are perceived by them as very important and necessary to be raised in public discussion and that there is a need to mobilize decision makers to focus on strengthening the protection of the labour rights in super/hyper markets. The recommendations will be used as supporting tool for the development of effective advocacy and lobbying strategy and for the future campaigns for a comprehensive system of the labour rights protection in the super/hyper markets.

2008-09-24