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Russian Railways Calls to Abolish List of Banned Professions for Women

February 28, 2018



Alexander Ryumin / TASS

Russia's state-run rail company has called on the government to abolish an official list of professions banned for women and to allow businesses to make their own hiring decisions.

The Soviet-era list includes over 400 professions in sectors such as metalworking, construction and mining and was originally introduced to protect women's safety and reproductive health. A section of the list is specifically dedicated to railways, with women legally prohibited from working as train drivers, driver's assistants, shunters and railway inspectors.

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Russian Railways has proposed to abolish the general list of banned professions and to establish a list of criteria for employers to assess risk factors for women themselves, according to an article in the company-run Gudok magazine published Monday.

“The Labor Ministry’s list is not objective in the present and may result in instances of discrimination against women’s labor,” the publication cited a company official as saying.

“Why are women allowed to fly planes, including military aircraft, but not work as train drivers? There are no equivalent restrictions in the U.S. or Finland,” the publication added.

Russia’s Labor Minister Maksim Topilin replied to the discussion on Tuesday by saying that the list would remain under the government’s supervision.

“Of course, the list has to be reviewed constantly, some professions will be dropped as labor conditions improve. But I hope it will never be in the employers’ purview,” he was cited as saying by the state-owned TASS news agency.

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