How is childcare keeping women out of the workforce in North Macedonia?

According to 2019 estimates, achieving universal enrolment for all children would result in a minimum of 5% annual growth in GDP, due to increased employment, higher earnings, and a rise in fiscal revenues.

Only 1 in 5 children aged 0–3 attends kindergarten and just 1 in 3 children aged 4–6 are enrolled in preschool. Half of women aged 15–64 are outside of the labour market due to household chores and childcare responsibilities, no men are inactive for these reasons. More than a quarter of unemployed women are not looking for a job because they need to take care of children. And no men report quitting their jobs for childcare, although 6.1% of women say they have.

What does this mean for families and especially for women?

How can we address this gap?

* More kindergartens

In 2022, 113 kindergartens served 35,932 kids, with many on waiting lists. To give every child a place, North Macedonia needs to double the number of kindergartens and triple its staff.

The policy of expanding the number of kindergartens is self-funding in the long run.

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More kindergartens

Fewer unemployed women

* Redistributing care and reconfiguring work

Investing in daycare is one solution, but how else can we solve this problem?

- Involving fathers in childcare
- Promoting flexible work arrangements
- Introducing paid parental leave