



New legislation regarding the protection of maternity and maternal breastfeeding

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On the 16th of April, 2018 the Cypriot Parliament introduced Law 20(I)/2018, Law for the Protection and Promotion of Maternal Breastfeeding, which amended the basic legislation on the protection of maternity (Law 100(I)/97). Specifically, the new law introduced the following changes:

1. Protection of maternity:

The end of the protective period for pregnant women/ new mothers was extended from 3 months to 5 months after the end of maternity leave. Thus, the protection of the Law regarding dismissals of pregnant women/ new mothers commences at the beginning of the pregnancy and ends five months after the end of maternity leave.

2. Protection, promotion and support of maternal breastfeeding:

- a) it establishes the working mothers' right to breastfeed or pump and store milk in the workplace (during the one-hour break they are entitled for breastfeeding or childcare purposes, under the provision of article 5 para. 1 of the Law);
- b) it establishes the employer's responsibility to provide their employees with all appropriate accommodation for breastfeeding or for pumping and storing milk in accordance with the provisions of Law 21(I)/2018 (Law for the Protection and Promotion of Maternal Breastfeeding). The new law establishes (a) a competent authority for the promotion and protection of maternal breastfeeding (the Minister of Health or any other person duly authorised by the Minister), and (b) a National Committee, responsible for providing the competent authority with guidance and support and for the preparation of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law (that will be eventually approved and issued by the Council of Ministers);
- c) it introduces stricter penalties for employers that violate any provision of the Law, who are now faced with a fine up to €7.000, regarding the first violation, and up to €8.000 for any further violation occurring within two years from the day the previous violation occurred.

According to the above, it is clear that now employers in Cyprus should be very careful and provide, if requested, their employees with all the accommodation needed for breastfeeding or for pumping and storing breast milk in the workplace (e.g. provide an appropriate area for breastfeeding or pumping breast milk, provide a refrigerator for breastmilk storage, etc). Also, employers should always evaluate their employees' requests regarding the facilitation of maternal breastfeeding and, in communication with them, explore options to accommodate their needs.

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