

Poland¹

Piotr Michoń (Poznań University of Economics), Anna Kurowska (University of Warsaw) and Irena Kotowska (Warsaw School of Economics)

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For comparisons with other countries in this review – on demographic, economic, employment and gender equality indicators and on leave provision and early childhood education and care services - go to [cross-country comparisons](#) page on website. To contact authors of country notes, go to [membership-list of members](#) page on website.

1. Current leave and other employment-related policies to support parents

a. Maternity leave (*urlop macierzyński*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Twenty six weeks. Up to two weeks can be used before the expected date of birth. The first 20 weeks are referred to as ‘maternity leave’ (*urlop macierzyński*), the next six weeks as ‘additional Maternity leave’ (*dodatkowy macierzyński*). It is obligatory for the mother to take 14 weeks.
- Eight weeks leave is given in the case of the death of a baby.

Payment and funding

- Twenty six weeks at 80 per cent or 100 per cent of average earnings for 12 months before the birth, with no ceiling on payments. If the mother chooses to take the 100 per cent option, any Parental leave taken will be paid at 60 per cent; if she chooses the 80 per cent option, it too will be paid at 80 per cent.
- Funded from the Social Insurance Fund, financed by contributions by employees (2.45 per cent of earnings) and self-employed workers (PLN55 [€13²] per month), with some additional finance from the State to cover pension contributions. There is no contribution from employers.

Flexibility in use

- The non-obligatory part of Maternity leave can be combined with part-time working (maximum half of full-time hours), with payment proportional to the working time.
- The mother has to decide what leave to take (the 100 per cent or 80 per cent payment options) two weeks before the start of the leave.

¹ Please cite as: Michoń, P., Kotowska, I.E. and Kurowska A. (2015) ‘Poland country note’, in: P. Moss (ed.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2015*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

²Conversion of local currency into Euros undertaken on 1-5 June 2015, using <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter/>

- After the obligatory period of 14 weeks leave, the remaining entitlement can be transferred to the father.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- Insured workers, including all employees and self-employed women covered by social security insurance at the start of leave.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- In the case of multiple births, the 'Maternity leave' part, which is 26 weeks for one birth, is extended to 37 weeks for twins, 39 weeks for triplets, 41 weeks for quadruplets and 43 weeks for quintuplets. Six weeks of this supplementary leave for multiple births is referred to as 'additional Maternity leave'.

b. Paternity leave (*urlop ojcowski*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- Two weeks.

Payment and funding

- One hundred per cent of average earnings for 12 months before birth, with no ceiling on payments.

Eligibility

- Insured workers, including all employees and self-employed men covered by social security insurance at the start of leave.

Flexibility in use

- It can be taken any time during 12 months after the birth of a child.

c. Parental leave (*urlop rodzicielski*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- 26 weeks per family. This is a family entitlement.

Payment and funding

- Payment depends on the payment option chosen by the mother taking Maternity leave. If during Maternity leave she opts to be paid at 100 per cent of earnings, the Parental leave benefit is paid at 60 per cent of average earnings for 12 months before the birth, with no ceiling on payments; but if she opts for 80 per cent of earnings, the Parental leave benefit is paid at the same level.
- Funding as for Maternity leave

Eligibility

- Insured workers, including all employees and self-employed men and women covered by social security insurance at the start of leave.
- The Parental leave can be taken only if the 26 weeks of Maternity leave and additional Maternity leave has been taken. This means the father's right to Parental leave depends on the mother's eligibility for and use of Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- The 26 weeks period can be taken as one continuous period of leave or as several periods (not more than three), each not shorter than eight weeks, each period immediately after another.
- Parental leave can be combined with part-time working (maximum half of full-time hours), with payment proportional to the working time.
- Both parents can take leave at the same time

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the mother

- None.

d. Childcare leave (*urlop wychowawczy*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- Thirty six months after Maternity leave until the child is five years old; 34 months is a family entitlement, with one month as an individual entitlement for the mother and another month for the father.

Payment and funding

- A parental allowance (*Dodatek z tytułu opieki nad dzieckiem w okresie korzystania z urlopu wychowawczego*) of PLN574 [€139] per month is paid for 24 months to parents taking leave as a supplement to family benefit, if monthly household income per capita does not exceed PLN539 [€131].
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Leave can be taken until a child's fifth birthday.
- Parents can take leave in one continuous period or in up to five separate blocks.
- Parents can take leave together for up to four months.
- Both parents have individual, non-transferable right to one month of the leave.
- During the leave period, parents may be employed and claim parental allowance, if working does not prevent them from caring for their children. A parent working while on leave can be employed by a different employer.

Eligibility (e.g. related to employment or family circumstances)

- Employees with a work record of at least six months.

Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g. multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; lone parent); or delegation of leave to person other than the parents

- The basic payment can be extended to 36 months where there is more than one child or to 72 months if a child is disabled.
- Leave may be extended for another 36 months if a child is disabled or chronically ill and requires care, but can be taken no later than the child's eighteenth birthday. A means-tested payment of PLN400 [€97] per month is made in these cases and the payment period can be extended up to 72 months.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations as for parents having their own children.
- Parental allowance is paid if the adopted child is seven years old or younger.

Time off for the care of dependants

- An employee can take leave of up to 14 days per year to provide personal care for a family member, paid at 80 per cent of earnings.
- An employee can take leave to care for a child up to eight years of age (14 years if the child is disabled or chronically ill) in the case of an unforeseen closure of a nursery school, kindergarten, or school; or the illness or childbirth of the spouse caring permanently for the child. This leave is also paid at 80 per cent of earnings for up to 60 days.

Flexible working

- None.

2. Relationship between leave policy and early childhood education and care policy

The maximum period of paid post-natal leave available in Poland is four years, but most of this is means-tested and low paid; leave paid at a high rate runs for twelve months. There is no entitlement to ECEC, but it is compulsory to attend ECEC (for one year) or to enter school from six years. So there is a gap of two years between the end of leave and ECEC entitlement and of five years between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. Levels of attendance at formal services for children under and over three years are below the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

3. Changes in policy since April 2014 (including proposals currently under discussion)

The introduction in 2016 of paid Parental leave for students, unemployed, farmers and people working on contract for commission was announced by the government. Currently, only employed or self-employed workers are entitled to Parental leave and parental benefit. The new allowance is to be flat-rate and will amount to PLN1000 (€ 240) per month, net. The allowance will not be means-tested and will be paid for 12 months (i.e. the Maternity and

Parental leave period) after the birth. The people entitled to the leave and allowance will have the right to be employed part-time and in this case the allowance will be reduced by half.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

The Social Insurance Institution (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych - ZUS*) collects data on Maternity, Parental and Paternity leave benefits. It must be stressed that the data on maternity benefit and parental benefit collected for 2012, 2013 and 2014 are not comparable, because until 2014 the data were only collected for employers with more than 20 employees.

According to ZUS In 2012 the Maternity benefit was paid (for at least one day) to 526,000 individuals, of which 360,600 were women and 165,500 were men. In 2014 427,000 mothers took at least one day of Maternity leave and 245,500 took 'additional Maternity leave'; for men it was 31,300 and 1,200 respectively. The drop in the number of men may be partly due to longer Paternity leave and other new provisions introduced during the year 2014

ZUS data on maternity benefit payments include the number of days paid to all recipients. This has been rising, probably due to the increase in the number of births since 2004 and changes in the regulations: from 2,226,200 days in 2004 to 4,262,400 in 2010 and 5,544,500 in 2013. The increase in the number of days observed in 2013 might be due to the increase of leave days available to parents.

The average payment has risen from PLN42.49 [€10] a day in 2005 to PLN72.58 [€18] in 2012. The main reason for this rise in the average payment is increased earnings in Poland.

b. Paternity leave

Statutory leave entitlement was only introduced in 2010. The first data on take-up indicate that 16,600 out of 100,000 entitled fathers took advantage of the leave in the 12 months up to August 2011; in the next eight months, the number of fathers taking leave was 14,200, implying an increasing take-up rate. In 2014, 129,400 fathers took at least one day of Paternity leave. Between January 2014 and December 2014 the number of fathers receiving the Paternity leave benefit increased from 9,500 to 14,100 per month. However the highest take-up rate was reported in August (20,900), September (23,600) and October (20,900).

Additionally the average payment during these months was also the highest: PLN132, PLN132 and PLN125 per day respectively [€32, €32 and €30]; while in December 2014, it was PLN110 [€27]. The data suggest that well-paid professionals take leave in the popular holiday season.

c. Parental leave

In 2013, a new leave option was introduced, enabling mothers to choose between 26 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings (then 26 weeks at 60 per cent) or 52 weeks at 80 per cent of earnings; leave can be transferred to fathers after 14 weeks. The first beneficiaries of these new regulations received their allowances in July (women) and late August 2013 (men). It is important to note that between July 2013 and January 2014, data were collected only for employers with more than 20 employees. Among these employees, the number of parents who received the Parental leave benefit (i.e. who took advantage of the new leave option) rose from around 6,200 in July to around 77,500 in January 2014. The vast majority were mothers who accounted for 99 per cent of all beneficiaries in September 2013 and 98.5 per cent in January 2014. However in absolute terms the number of fathers taking at least part of the 'Parental leave' rose from 200 in September 2013 to 1,100 in January 2014.

In 2014 315,800 parents took the Parental leave benefit of which 310.600 were women and 5,200 (i.e. 1.65 per cent) were men.

d. Childcare leave

There are no regular and coherent government statistics on the use of Childcare leave (*urlop wychowawczy* – literally ‘childcare leave’) and Childcare allowances. Statistics show the number of parents taking leave declined from 336,000 in 1993 to 139,000 in 2000; a major reason for this fall was the rapid decline in fertility, the number of births dropping from 547,700 in 1990 to 378,300 in 2000. Another source shows that the number of persons returning to work from Childcare leave and unpaid leave declined steadily from 49,000 in 2000 to 41,000 in 2002 and 35,000 in 2005.

Other statistics refer to the monthly average numbers receiving ‘Childcare allowance’, the supplement to family benefit paid to parents taking Childcare leave: these have declined from 164,000 persons in 2000 to 63,000 in 2003. Reforms of family benefits implemented in 2004 increased the numbers to 140,000 in 2005 but they fell back to 130,668 in 2006, 126,178 in 2007, 125,100 in 2008, 121,200 in 2009 and 111,900 in 2010. The average amount of the ‘Childcare allowance’ has also been decreasing in recent years, from PLN404 [€98] per month in 2005 to PLN382 [€93] in 2008; but in 2009, there was a small increase to PLN385.88 [€93]. In 2012 the allowance increased on average to PLN389 [€94] and the average number of allowances paid every month was 81,550. In 2013 the average number of allowances paid every month dropped to 68,470 and the allowance decreased on average to PLN386 [€94]. The reported decrease in take-up rate of Childcare leave seems to be due to the prolongation of the maternity leave to 52 weeks.

Summing up, the available official statistics do not show the incidence of Childcare leave among parents entitled to take leave, the proportion of parents who receive Childcare allowance, or the average duration of leave; and despite the fact that fathers are entitled to Childcare leave since 1996, no data about their take-up are collected.

A more precise picture of take-up of Childcare leave comes from analyses of data collected in the second quarter of 2005 using a module added to the Labour Force Survey³. Amongst those entitled to take Childcare leave, nearly 50 per cent of mothers but only 2.5 per cent of fathers did so. Due to the low benefit level and means testing, Childcare leave was most used by low paid mothers and mothers with low levels of education; leave was taken by 37 per cent of mothers with university education, 54 per cent with secondary education, and 61 per cent with the lowest educational level. Women with higher qualifications (specialists and managers) were also more reluctant to take leave than women employed in the personal service sector or offices.

About 70 per cent of women who took Childcare leave were entitled to Childcare allowance (i.e. their household income was low enough to be eligible). One in two women with tertiary education received Childcare allowance compared to 72 per cent of women with only secondary education and 81 per cent of women with the lowest level of education. Women

³ Kotowska I.E. and Baranowska, A. (2006) *Praca a obowiązki rodzinne w 2005 r.* [Work and family in 2005, Information and Statistical Analyses]. Warsaw: Central Statistical Office; Matysiak, A. (2007) ‘Organizacja czasu pracy i opieki’ [‘Work and care’], in: I.E. Kotowska, U. Sztanderska and I. Wóycicka (eds.) *Aktywność zawodowa i edukacyjna a obowiązki rodzinne* [Economic and educational activities and family]. Scholar Publishing Company.

living in villages were more likely to receive the allowance than their counterparts in towns (82 per cent and 64 per cent respectively).

Among reasons for not taking Childcare leave, mothers indicated financial reasons more often than fathers (30 per cent of mothers vs. 14 per cent of fathers). However, reasons related to employment seem to be more relevant than financial ones. Concerns about possible negative career impacts of taking Childcare leave and preferences to stay in employment were raised by 37 per cent of mothers and 30 per cent of fathers. Urban residents were more concerned about these negative effects.

In discussion on take-up of Childcare leave, the underdevelopment of institutional childcare services cannot be ignored. In 2005 only two per cent of children under three years of age attended crèches, and 41 per cent of children aged three to five years attended kindergartens; according to the National Statistics Office, in 2010-11 20,174 two-year-olds were in nursery, compared to 192,588 children three-year-olds who were in kindergarten. These figures for attendance at ECEC are low compared to other EU Member States. In addition, no childcare subsidies are offered to families. The estimated cost of childcare to a minimum income earner ranges from 23 per cent of earnings to 82 per cent and for a person with an average monthly income from 8.5 per cent to 30 per cent. Childcare is therefore less affordable to single and/or minimum income families and/or for families with more than one child requiring childcare.

If one also takes into account the rather inflexible work arrangements and the limited provision of part-time work, it is clear there are strong incompatibilities between work and parenthood in Poland. The family policy can be labelled as an 'imposed home care' model: employed parents have mostly to rely on themselves and support of relatives to ensure childcare. In the 2005 survey, nearly 45 per cent of mothers of children below three years of age, who were not in work, state that difficulties in reconciling work and care for small children were the main reason for their decisions to stay out of the labour market. At the same time, nearly one-third of mothers could not find a job.

In the largest Polish survey *Diagnoza Społeczna*, published in 2011 and in 2013, the respondents were asked to select a solution that would facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities⁴. In 2011 a longer Maternity leave was most often given as the best solution for reconciling work and family life, both by women (26 per cent) and men (20 per cent). In 2013 it was 24 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. However in comparison to 2011 in 2013 other answers were on the top of the ranking: flexible working time (indicated by more than half of women and men), childcare facilities for children under obligatory school age and higher Childcare leave (*urlop wychowawczy*) benefit. It seems that after the changes in the leave policy the respondents now stress the need for developing childcare facilities (the participation rate is rather low in Poland) and increasing the allowances for those who care for children at home. However the most important change is in the social attitude towards flexible working time. The comparison of men's and women's responses leads to the conclusion that women are more interested in the development of childcare facilities, while men indicate the childcare allowance as a tool for reconciling work and family life.

Similarly, long Maternity and Childcare leave is often discussed as a tool for encouraging people to have more children. In 2012 27 per cent of Poles indicated 'longer maternity leaves' as a tool to achieve this aim⁵; while in 2013 almost half of Polish society considered 12 months of leave (Maternity and Parental) after birth to be an effective tool for encouraging young

⁴ Czapiński J. and Panek T. (eds.) (2011) *Diagnoza społeczna [rok]*. Available at: <http://www.diagnoza.com/index.html>

⁵ CBOS (2012) *Polityka państwa wobec rodziny [State policy towards the family]* (No. BS/67/2012). Warszawa: CBOS.

people for having children⁶. By the same token, Polish society does not consider 'Paternity leave' to be an important policy tool.

Given these results, it is not surprising that the extension in 2013 of Maternity leave, and introducing six months of 'Parental' leave, gained much support in Polish society; 91 per cent of adult Poles rated it beneficial⁷. But most people (58 per cent) did not think men were interested in taking the 'Parental' leave part. After the extension of Maternity leave, two other measures to support reconciling work and family have considerable support: flexible working hours (55 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women); and childcare facilities for children under 7 years (33 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women)⁸.

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2014

a. General overview

Recent years have brought a rising interest in leave policies and work–family arrangements both in research and public discourse. Studies of developments in family life and changes in family policy in Poland have been carried out, often taking a comparative perspective and referring to EU policy. Labour market developments and their possible impacts on family behaviours, as well as the effects of leave policies on employment careers, have also received attention. Moreover, in studies on reconciling work and family life, gender issues and the role of employers are increasingly under consideration.

Another important development in research on family policy is an increasing use of sample surveys designed to study opinions on existing policy measures, the use of these measures and support for different policy options.

b. Selected publications since April 2014

Bierca, M. (2014) 'Urlopy „tacierzyńskie” w Polsce – silny trend czy chwilowa moda? Rozważania w kontekście przemian ról w rodzinie' [Paternity Leave in Poland – Strong Trend or a Fad? Considerations in the Context of Changes of Family Roles'], *Studia Socjologiczne*, Vol.215, No.4: 41-58

The article discusses the issue of changing roles in the family with an emphasis on the transformation of fatherhood, inspired by recent changes in the law regulating Paternity leave in Poland (17 June 2013) and also a growing trend to discuss the subject of fatherhood and masculinity in the media. The key hypothesis is: Polish society is in the process of redefining family roles, but rhetoric is ahead of practice. Moreover, women seem to be the promoters of change, while men are just beginning to confront the challenges they face. The article discusses the recent results of the author's quantitative research on a representative nationwide sample. The discussion concerns the positive social perception of Paternity leave juxtaposed with the more slowly progressing redefinition of the role of a woman and a man at

⁶ CBOS (2013) *O roli kobiet w rodzinie (No. BS/30/2013) [The role of women in the family]*. Warszawa: CBOS.

⁷ CBOS (2013a) *Postawy prokreacyjne kobiet (No. BS/29/2013) [Attitudes to women's fertility]* Warszawa: CBOS.

⁸ Czapiński, J., and Panek, T. (2013) 'Diagnoza społeczna 2013: warunki i jakość życia Polaków' [Social Diagnosis 2013: conditions and quality of life of Poles'], *Quarterly of the University of Finance and Management in Warsaw*, Vol.7 (special issue).

the level of everyday care and education practices. Finally, the most likely reasons for the fact that the changes progress at a low pace are discussed

Wujczyk, M. (2014) 'Urlop rodzicielski - nowa instytucja ochrony rodzicielstwa' ['Parental Leave - New Institution of Parenthood Protection'], *Polityka Społeczna*, No.2: 21-24.

The article presents the regulation introduced by the Act of 28 May 2013, which changes Parental leave. It presents both the target of the leave as well as the basic problems arising in terms of the use of this right by the workers. Particular attention is paid to the issues of application for leave by employees and cancellation of leave. It also describes privileges for people using Parental leave.

Ziółkowska, K. (2014) 'Nowe rozwiązania prorodzinne na podstawie prawa polskiego oraz europejskiego' ['New pro-family Solutions under Polish and European Law'], *Studia Warmińskie*, No.51: 273-282

Galik, A. (2015) 'Wybrane instrumenty aktywizacji zawodowej kobiet w ciąży i po porodzie w Polsce' ['Selected professional activation tools of women during pregnancy and childbirth in Poland'], *Współczesna Gospodarka*, Vol. 6, No.1: 33-42

The article presents the situation of women, employed on the basis of the Labour Code, before and after childbirth in the context of current rights and privileges. The last part of the paper shows different forms of childcare services, their availability and limitations. The purpose of this article is to present the individual behaviour of economically active women as pregnant women, and who after birth make choices based on the available professional activation tools, selecting the most beneficial for their households. In conclusion the author identify new solutions that are beneficial for the individual, household, and the whole economy.

c. Ongoing research

None reported.