

# Cyprus<sup>1</sup>

**Maria Angeli** (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies)

April 2023

For comparisons with other countries in this review on leave provision and early childhood education and care services, please see the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review (also available individually on the [Leave Network website](#)). To contact authors of country notes, see the [members](#) page on the Leave Network website.

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

### **a. Maternity leave**

#### *Length of leave (prior to and following childbirth)*

- Eighteen weeks, including two weeks before the birth.
- It is obligatory to take 11 weeks, including two weeks prior to the week of the expected birth and the rest following childbirth.

#### *Payment and funding*

- Seventy-two per cent of earnings with no upper limit.
- Payments are not taxed.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Maternity leave can start two weeks before the expected week of birth or from the week of the actual birth.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please cite as: Angeli, M. (2023) 'Cyprus country note', in in Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

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

- Full-time and part-time female employees, as well as self-employed women and voluntarily insured women who are expecting a child, have adopted a child up to 12 years of age, surrogate mothers or mothers who have got a child through surrogacy are entitled to Maternity leave.
- Persons who have a permit or the right to reside and work in Cyprus are entitled to the benefits irrespective of nationality.

*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 the birth of multiple children, the period of 18 weeks is increased by four weeks for each additional child (e.g., 22 weeks for twins and 26 weeks for triplets). Payment increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent of earnings for the second, third and fourth child respectively.
- In the case of premature labour or in any other case where the infant is hospitalised right after birth for health reasons, the mother is entitled to additional Maternity leave as follows: for the first 21 days that the infant is in an incubator, the employee is entitled to one additional week of Maternity leave. If the infant remains hospitalised, the employee is entitled to an additional week of leave for every additional 50 per cent of a 21-day period (i.e. 10.5 days that the baby remains in hospital) up to a maximum of six additional weeks in total.
- In order to be granted leave over and above a period of 18 weeks, the employee must provide her employer with written certification from the hospital and from a doctor with the relevant speciality.
- In the case of surrogate mothers, there is 14 weeks of leave starting two weeks before the expected week of confinement; and 18 weeks in the case of a woman getting a child through surrogacy.

*Additional note (e.g., if leave payments are often supplemented by collective agreements; employer exclusions or rights to postpone)*

- For public sector employees, the first 12 weeks of leave are fully compensated, while the following six weeks are paid at 72 per cent of the employee's salary.
- Some private companies cover the remaining 28 per cent for the first child: in such cases, an employer can request the maternity benefit from the state on behalf of the employee, then add the balance, so that the employee receives a full salary from the employer.

## **b. Paternity leave**

*Length of leave*

- Two consecutive weeks.

### *Payment*

- Seventy-two per cent of earnings with no upper limit.
- Payments are not taxed.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Paternity leave may be used across any two consecutive weeks up to two weeks after the end of the Maternity leave, following the birth or the adoption of the child.
- The right to Paternity leave also applies in the case of childbirth resulting in the birth of a stillborn child.
- If the mother passes away before or during childbirth, or during her Maternity leave, the right to Paternity leave increases by the same number of weeks as the remaining weeks of Maternity leave that the mother would have been entitled to if she had not passed away.

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

- Paternity leave is granted to men whose partners has given birth or had a child through a surrogate mother; or have adopted a child under the age of 12 years.

### *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, payment increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent of earnings for the second, third and fourth child respectively.

## **c. Parental leave**

### *Length of leave*

- Eighteen weeks per parent per child.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, part of which (two weeks) is transferable to the other parent.
- Only up to five weeks of leave can be taken in any one calendar year (or seven weeks if there are three or more children).

### *Payment and funding*

- Six weeks is paid at 72 per cent of earnings with no upper limit, and due to be extended to eight weeks (see Section 3); the remaining period is unpaid.
- The employee's social insurance contribution continues to be paid into their social insurance fund for the entirety of the leave period.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Parental leave can be taken at any time between the birth of a child and the child turning eight years of age. Parents with disabled children can take Parental leave until their child reaches the age of 18 years.
- Parental leave can be taken for between one week (minimum) and five weeks (maximum) per calendar year for one or two children, and seven weeks for three or more children.
- When one parent has taken Parental leave of at least two weeks, they can transfer two weeks from the rest of their leave to the other parent.

### *Eligibility*

- All employed parents with non-disabled children up to the age of eight years or disabled children up to the age of 18 years, who have completed at least six months of continuous employment with the same employer and have been employed for a period of twelve months within the previous twenty-four months before the start of the period for which parental leave benefits are being applied.
- Same sex couples cannot legally parent a child together in Cyprus. They cannot adopt a child together or be recognised as the parent of a child who was conceived by a female partner through medically assisted reproduction. They are also not eligible to apply for surrogacy.

### *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*

- In the case of premature birth or the mother having health issues, Parental leave can be taken before the expected week of birth.
- In the case of widowed parents or single parents the leave can be increased to 23 weeks.

### **d. Childcare leave or career breaks**

- No statutory entitlement.

### **e. Other types of leave and flexible working**

#### *Care leave*

- An employee is entitled to take five days of unpaid care leave annually, provided that there is a documented need for it. The leave may be taken as a lump sum or in parts.

### *Adoption leave and pay*

- Sixteen weeks in case of adoption, if the child is under the age of 12 years.
- Fourteen weeks for surrogate mothers and 18 weeks for mothers who have a child through a surrogate mother.

### *Time off for the care of dependants*

- Any employee is entitled to unpaid leave of up to seven days a year, on grounds of *force majeure* (i.e., for urgent cases such as a dependant being sick or in an accident). A dependant is defined as a child, husband, wife, parent, brother, sister, grandfather, or grandmother of the employee.
- Such leave may be granted as a single period of leave or split across separate periods of time.
- For married couples, each spouse is individually entitled to such leave.

### *Breastfeeding breaks*

- Following Maternity leave, for the purposes of breastfeeding, a working mother has the right to arrive at work one hour later, leave work one hour earlier, or take a one-hour break during the workday for a period of six months.

### *Flexible Work Arrangements*

- Working parents have the right to request flexible working arrangements for care reasons. This includes adjusting employment patterns through remote work, flexible schedules, or reduced hours. To be eligible, employees must have completed six months of continuous employment with the same employer. Employers must respond to requests within one month and have the right to reject or postpone the request, providing relevant reasoning for their decision.

### *Antenatal appointments and care*

- Pregnant employees are permitted paid time off for antenatal examinations, provided that such examinations need to be carried out during working hours. They should give advance notice to their employers and provide a relevant doctor's note.

### *Child birth grant*

- A lump sum of €548.82 per child is paid to the mother if her or her husband are insured for the birth of a live child or a stillbirth after a pregnancy of at least 28 weeks. The application for child birth grant has to be submitted within one year from the birth.

### *Special maternity benefit for unmarried mothers*

- A lump sum of €554.08 is paid to the mothers who are not entitled to the child birth grant. The application for the special maternity benefit has to be submitted within three months from the birth.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is six months, with well-paid leave lasting only 5.6 months (including the new Parental leave). Attendance at ECEC is obligatory for children from the age of four years and eight months. There is a gap, therefore, of just over four years between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, and even longer between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on the [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

## **3. Changes in policy since April 2022 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

The Leave Paternity, Parental, Carer, Force Majeure, and Flexible Working Arrangements for Work-Life Balance Law of 2022 has replaced and repealed the previous laws to align with EU Directive 2019/1158. The new law introduces several key changes, such as Parental leave allowance for eight weeks. Additionally, the father's marital status is no longer relevant, as there used to be a restrictive requirement that a father must be in a civil relationship with or married to the mother of the child in order to be eligible for Paternity leave. Also, the law introduces the concept of unpaid carer's leave for up to five days a year as well as flexible working arrangements. The Law also allows for an extension of Paternity leave and allowance in case of the mother's death, equal to any unused Maternity leave and allowance she may have been entitled to.

Cyprus is set to gradually reduce the minimum age for compulsory pre-primary education entry over the next few years, following the recent passing of a new law by the government. The plan consists of three phases, starting in the 2023-2024 academic year where the minimum age will be lowered by two months, allowing children who are four years and six months old before 1 September 2023, to attend pre-primary school. The following year, the minimum age will be lowered by an additional two months, allowing children who are four years and four months old before 1 September 2024 to attend. Finally, in the 2025-2026 academic year, the minimum age for mandatory pre-primary education will be lowered by eight months, allowing children who are four years old before 1 September 2025, to attend. Pre-primary education will be compulsory and free during all three phases.

## **4. Uptake of leave**

### **a. Maternity leave**

- 7,125 applications for Maternity leave were approved in 2021.

### **b. Paternity leave**

- 3,453 applications for Paternity leave were approved in 2021.

### **c. Parental leave**

- 238 applications for Parental leave were approved in 2021.