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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**

**Note on leave information:** the information given below is based on: (i) leave arrangements for employees in the private sector that are covered by legislation and the National General Collective Agreements (NGCA) signed between the most representative national employers' organisations (SEV, GSEVEE, ESEE, and SETE) and the General Confederation of Labour, which set the uniform minimum provisions for all workers in the private sector<sup>2</sup>; (ii) leave arrangements for public sector employees that are covered by basic laws and the Code for Civil Servants and relevant legislation.

### ***i. Private sector (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)***

#### **a. Maternity leave (basic leave – *Άδεια Μητρότητας*; special leave for the protection of maternity – *Ειδική Άδεια για την Προστασία της Μητρότητας*)**

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<sup>2</sup> Provisions for leave arrangements are also included in other kinds of Collective Labour Agreements (i.e., sectoral, professional, and enterprise), which are signed between employers and confederations of large sub-sectors of the economy (e.g., the banking sector) or enterprises of the wider public sector (e.g., the electricity company). Due to the fact that such agreements cannot include worse provisions than the minimum standards included in the National General Collective Agreement, they usually have improved provisions for working parents.

### *Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- Basic leave: 17 weeks – eight weeks must be taken before birth and nine weeks after birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.
- Special leave: nine months, granted after basic Maternity leave and before the beginning of the Childcare leave (if the latter is taken as reduced daily hours of work).

### *Payment and funding*

- Basic leave: 100 per cent of earnings, on the condition that these do not exceed those granted to insured persons who belong to the highest insurance class of e-EFKA (the National Social Security Agency, where all employees working under private law contracts are insured (former IKA-ETAM). However, if the amount of salary/wage exceeds this upper limit, the employee can claim a supplementary benefit that is equal to the difference between the employee's salary and the basic benefit received by e-EFKA. The supplementary benefit is granted by OAED, the Manpower Employment Organisation which is, *inter alia*, the social insurance fund for income protection against unemployment.
- Mothers are entitled a 50 per cent reduction of their insurance contributions for the twelve months that follow the birth month or the twelve months following the maternity benefit irrespective of whether they work or are on leave during this period.
- Maternity leave (both basic and special) is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.
- Payments are taxed, except for special maternity benefit which is not taxed.
- Special leave: minimum daily wage as defined by law, as well as social insurance coverage. It is funded by OAED.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Basic leave: none, except for when leave can start. If the birth takes place before the time envisaged, the rest of the leave can be granted after the birth, as long as the total time taken remains at 17 weeks.
- Special leave: if the parent uses Childcare leave as a continuous time off work, then the special leave is taken after the Childcare leave. If not, the leave is taken after the basic Maternity leave.
- Mothers have the right to transfer up to seven months of the leave to fathers.

### *Eligibility*

- Basic leave: to ensure full compensation, 200 working days during the previous two years, irrespective of whether on a fixed-term or permanent contract (or citizenship). Mothers acquiring children through surrogacy are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of the leave. Mothers adopting a

child up to eight years of age are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of the leave.

- Special leave: those insured in e-EFKA with fixed-term or permanent contracts. Mothers acquiring children through surrogacy as well as adoptive mothers of children up to eight years old are also entitled to this benefit. If mothers transfer part of their leave to fathers, the fathers should be in a dependent employment relationship, with full or part-time contracts<sup>3</sup>.
- Self-employed women, who are directly insured in the Social Security Fund for the Self-Employed (OAEE) and the United Fund for the Self-Employed (ETAA), and fully covered for medical and pharmaceutical care at the time of the child's birth, are entitled to get a monthly payment for four months. In the first case, the benefit is €150 per month; in the second case, it is €200 per month. The benefit is granted in a lump sum following an application by the insured mother after the date of birth. The payment is made by the above funds from their own budgets. No other leave rights are available for self-employed parents. Self-employed surrogate mothers, mothers acquiring children through surrogacy, and mothers that adopt children up to two years of age are also entitled to receive this benefit.

*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.

## **b. Paternity leave (Άδεια πατρότητας)**

*Length of leave*

- Fourteen working days.

*Payment and funding*

- One hundred per cent of earnings, paid by the employer.
- Payments are taxed.

*Eligibility*

- There are no length of service conditions or conditions related to the conjugal or family circumstances of the working father.
- In cases of adoption or foster care, the Paternity leave is granted for children up to eight years old after the placement of the child in the family.
- Foster same-sex fathers are entitled to this leave. Same-sex couples cannot adopt a child but if in the couple there is a biological father, he can use the leave.

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<sup>3</sup> Decreed by a Ministerial Decision not yet published when this report is being prepared.

### *Flexibility*

- Two days can be granted before the date of expected birth and the rest should be granted fully or partially within thirty days after birth.

## **c. Parental leave (*Γονική Άδεια*)**

### *Length of leave*

- Four months per child for each parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable right.

### *Payment and funding*

- For the first two months, the Manpower Employment Organisation is obliged to pay each parent monthly the Parental leave benefit that corresponds to the level of minimum wage.
- The leave is considered as real time service. The paid part of the leave is fully insured. The non-paid part of the leave can be fully insured too but in this case the employee pays both the employee and employer contributions.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave may be taken up to the time that the child turns eight years of age.
- Leave may be taken in one or several blocks of time or as daily reduced hours or as days of leave distributed weekly or monthly, subject to the agreement of the employer who, in case of disagreement with the time suggested by the employee, needs to explain in writing the reason of his/her disagreement. In any case, the employer needs to provide the leave within two months from the submission of the request.

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

- All employees who have completed one year's continuous or consecutive fixed-term contacts with the same employer.
- Leave is an individual entitlement that cannot be transferred.
- Though the leave is for each child, it is necessary that one year of work with the same employer is completed after the end of any Parental leave taken for a previous child.
- Adoptive and foster parents receive the leave from the time that the child is placed in the family.
- Foster same-sex parents are entitled to this leave. Same-sex couples cannot adopt a child but if in the couple there is a biological parent, he/she can use the 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 parents*

- Parents with twins or children born in multiple births can receive the benefit for an additional two months period, irrespectively of the number of children born together.
- Parents who are single due to the death of the other parent or total removal of custody or non-recognition of the child by the other parent are entitled to the receive double Parental leave (time and benefit).

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

- Leave is granted by the employer according to a set of priorities: requests for Parental leave from parents of children with a disability, with long-term illness or sudden illness and from single parents (due to the death of parent, total removal of parental responsibility, or non-recognition of the child) and mothers who have taken their basic and special Maternity leave are dealt with as an absolute priority. Also, priority is given to parents whose child is hospitalised or ill or whose spouse or close relative is seriously ill as well as parents of multiple or premature births. So, though the employer cannot refuse Parental leave, he/she can negotiate with the employee to take it later if other employees who request leave at the same time meet the priority criteria.
- Parental leave and the form that is provided should be recorded in the government platform ERGANI.

#### **d. Childcare leave (*άδεια φροντίδας τέκνου*)**

- A working parent, even if his/her spouse is not working, is entitled to a childcare leave that may be taken as: (a) two hours fewer per day for the first 12 months and one hour less per day for another six months; (b) full working days that are distributed on a weekly basis; (c) block or blocks of time of equal time value within the 30-month period after Maternity leave. This last option means that a parent can take a number of months off work, up to an estimated 3.6 months or (d) any other way that the two parties agree. The leave is a family entitlement and is fully compensated. Working parents have an independent right to the use of this leave, after deciding who and for how long each will take the leave.
- This leave is considered part of working time, so is paid and funded by the employer with no upper limit on payment.
- Adoptive and foster parents are also entitled to this leave from the time the child enters the family.
- Non-biological partners in same-sex couples are not eligible for this leave unless they are foster parents.

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

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

- *Carer's leave:* Each working person that completed six months of continuous work or work with consecutive fixed-term contracts is entitled to an unpaid carer's leave up to five days in a year for the care of a person who lives in the same household that needs such care due to a serious medical reason.
- *Absence due to reasons of force majeure:* Up to twice a year and up to one day each time a working parent or carer is entitled to a paid leave for reasons of force majeure for urgent family reasons related to illness or an accident.
- *Leave for children's sickness:* Up to six working days per year per parent of unpaid leave if the parent has one child; up to eight working days if they have two children; and up to ten working days if they have three or more children. Children should be under sixteen years of age or older if they need special care. The leave is also granted for other dependent members of the family (e.g., a disabled spouse, as well as disabled parents or unmarried siblings who cannot care for themselves and the worker cares for them if their annual income is less than the basic income of an unskilled worker).
- *Leave for visiting children's school:* up to four working days' paid leave per year per parent for each child that attends school up to the age of 18, funded by the employer. This is a family leave and can be taken only by the one parent or shared between them.
- *Leave for parents of children with a disability:* one hour per day, if the parent asks for it (unpaid and only applied in businesses with more than 50 employees).
- *Leave for parents whose children, irrespectively of their age, need regular transfusion or dialysis or a transplant or have cancer, significant learning difficulties, Down's syndrome, or autism:* ten working days' paid leave per year, funded by the employer. This is an individual right.
- *Leave for parents due to the hospitalisation of a child, irrespectively of his/her age, which requires their immediate presence:* up to 30 working days' unpaid leave per year. This is an individual right.
- *Leave for working parents who are single due to the death of their spouse or because are unmarried and have the exclusive care of the child up to the age of twelve:* in addition to other leaves, six working days' paid leave per year. If the parent has three or more children, the leave is eight working days per year. The leave payment is funded by the employer.
- *Leave for medically assisted reproduction:* Working women are entitled to seven paid working days for such medical treatment.
- Pregnant working women who need to attend *prenatal examinations* during their working time are excused from work in order to attend such medical appointments.

### *Specific provision for (breast) feeding*

- None

### *Flexible working*

- Each working parent of a child up to 12 years of age or a carer is entitled, for caring reasons, to ask for flexible working arrangements such as telework, flexible daily work schedule and or part-time work. To claim such arrangements the working parent or carer must have completed six months of continuous work or consecutive fixed-term work contracts with the same employer. The employer should document the reason for possible rejection or postponement of the request.

### *Work rights of people taking leave/flexible working arrangements*

- Working people do not lose any of their work rights due to the up taking of leave/flexible working arrangements and return to the same or an equivalent position with the same terms and conditions of work. Working people cannot be dismissed for the above reasons and if a dismissal takes place should explain the reasons in writing.
- It is forbidden to discriminate against workers because they used their leave and flexible arrangements rights or because they submitted a complaint against their employer for not conforming to the law.
- Working women cannot be dismissed during pregnancy and for 18 months after birth. Working fathers cannot be dismissed for six months after birth.
- The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs is obliged to upload on its website information regarding the leave and related rights, while the employers are obliged of inform their employees of these rights.

## ***ii. Public sector (responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior)<sup>4</sup>***

### ***a. Maternity leave (Άδεια Μητρότητας)***

#### *Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- Five months: two months must be taken before birth and three after birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.

#### *Payment and funding*

- One hundred per cent of earnings, with no upper limit on payment.
- Maternity leave is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded through general taxation.

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<sup>4</sup> The leave entitlements described in this section cover civil servants, employees of public entities, and local government, as well as any other employee in the above bodies not covered by special regulations.

### *Flexibility in use*

- If the birth takes place before the time envisaged, the rest of the leave can be granted after the birth, so long as the total time taken remains at five months. If the birth takes place after the time envisaged, the leave is extended until the actual birth date, without any respective reduction in the post-natal leave.

### *Eligibility*

- There are no conditions linked to the length of service.
- Mothers that adopt a child up to eight years age or that obtain a child through surrogacy are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of the 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, Maternity leave after the birth is extended by one month for each additional child.
- For every child after the third, the length of post-natal leave is extended by two months.

## **b. Paternity leave (Άδεια Πατρότητας)**

### *Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- Fourteen working days. Two days can be granted before the date of expected birth and the rest should be granted fully or partially within thirty days after birth.

### *Payment and funding*

- One hundred per cent of earnings, paid by the employer.
- Payments are taxed.

### *Eligibility*

- There are no conditions linked to the length of service or conditions related to the conjugal or family circumstances of the employee.
- In cases of adoption or foster care, the paternity leave is granted for children up to eight years old after the placement of the child in the family.
- Foster same-sex parents are entitled this leave but not adoptive same-sex parents as the law does not presently allow adoption by such couples.



### **c. Parental leave (*Γονική άδεια*)**

#### *Length of leave*

- Five years per parent.
- Leave is an individual non-transferable entitlement.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave may be taken at any time until the child turns eight years, in one or several blocks of time or as daily reduced hours.

#### *Payment and funding*

- For employees with one or two children, the employer, for each child, pays the parent the Parental leave benefit for the first two months. The level of payment corresponds to the level of minimum wage (see below provisions for special categories of parents). The leave is funded through general taxation.
- For each child, four months of the Parental leave are considered as real time service, for any consequence.

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

- There are no conditions linked to the length of service.
- An employee can use this leave if his/her spouse does not make use of the childcare leave or flexible working arrangements at the same time
- An employee can make use of this leave irrespectively of the employment situation of his/her spouse.
- In cases of separation, divorce, widowhood, or birth without marriage, only the parent that cares for the child is entitled to this leave.
- Adoptive and foster parents receive the leave from the time that the child is placed in the family.
- Foster same-sex parents are granted this leave but not adoptive same-sex parents as the law does not presently allow adoption by such couples unless one of the two partners is the biological father.

#### *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 three or more children, three months of the leave are fully paid.
- Employees with twins or triplets or multiple births can receive the Parental leave for each child and can, in addition to the two paid months, receive the benefit for two extra months irrespectively of the number of children in multiple births.

- Parents that are single due to the death of the other parent or total removal of parental custody or non-recognition by the child by the other parent can receive a double leave (time and benefit).
- Priority in the granting of the leave is given to special categories of parents such as disabled parents or with a disabled child or a child with long-term or sudden illness, parents with many children, single parents as defined above and mothers following their Maternity leave. Priority is also given to parents due to the hospitalisation or illness of the child or due to disability or serious illness of the husband/wife, partner or relative, to parents of twins, triplets or multiple births as well as to parents following premature birth.

#### **d. Childcare leave (*άδεια φροντίδας τέκνου*)**

- A parent can use this fully paid leave in two ways: (a) in a block of nine months or (b) as reduced hours of daily work, that is, two hours less per day until the child turns two and one hour less if the child is between two and four.
- The leave is paid by the employer, funded through general taxation, and is granted after the Maternity leave. The leave does not constitute a personal entitlement and can be used by either or both parents within the total nine-month period.
- For a parent who is unmarried, widowed, divorced, or has a severe disability, the leave is extended by one month if it is taken in a block time or by six months if it is taken as reduced daily hours of work. In the case of multiple births, an extra six months is provided for each child if it is taken as reduced daily hours of work. In the case of the birth of a fourth child, flexible working is extended by two years.
- Adoptive and foster parents of children up to four years of age also have the right to receive care leave, that is, reduced working hours per day or the nine months leave unless the time that is left before the child turns four years old is less than nine months. Adoptive and foster fathers can also receive Paternity leave.

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

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

- Leave for children's illness: up to four working days of paid leave per year if the employee has one or two children; up to seven working days of paid leave per year if the employee has three children; up to ten working days of paid leave per year if the employee has four or more children; and up to eight working days of paid leave per year if the employee is a single parent. The leave constitutes an individual right.
- Leave for children's sickness: parents are entitled to one month of non-paid leave in the case of the hospitalisation of their child due to illness or an accident that requires their presence.

- Leave for visiting children's school: up to four working days of paid leave for one child, and up to five working days for two or more children. If the children attend different levels of schools, an extra day is granted. The leave is not a personal entitlement: i.e. if both parents work in the public sector, the total number of days is for both parents to share.
- Up to 22 working days of paid leave per year for employees whose children or spouses need regular transfusion or periodic therapy, or whose children, even if they are adults have a serious intellectual disability or Down's syndrome or Pervasive Developmental Disorder that prevent them from working. In the case the employee cares for more than one person the leave goes up to 32 days per year. In the case that more than one employees are entitled to this leave (i.e. spouses caring for a child with PDS), the leave can go up to 32 days for both.
- Employees that are not entitled to the above leave and either themselves or his/her child, irrespective of his/her age, has disability classified as being more than 50 per cent that prevents him/her from working are entitled to a special paid leave of six working days annually. In the case the employee cares for more than one person the leave goes up to ten working days annually. In the case that more than one employee is entitled to this leave, the leave can go up to ten days for both.
- Employees who have a spouse or a child that suffers from cancer and is subject to various forms of treatment are entitled to a special leave for the day the treatment takes place and the following day.
- Leave for employees with children or spouses with a disability: one hour per day, paid.
- Leave to undergo fertility treatment: Working women are entitled to seven paid working days.

#### *Specific provision for (breast) feeding*

- None

#### *Flexible working*

- Employees can ask the reduction of their hours of work up to 50 per cent, with the respective reduction of their remuneration for a period of up to five years. The hours of non-employment are not considered as real time service. For working parents of children up to eight the leave does not need an approval of the Service Council. No other provisions of flexible working are foreseen.

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

There is an entitlement to ECEC at around four years of age. This means that there is no gap between the end of post-natal leave and an entitlement to ECEC for public sector workers, but there is a gap of around two and a half years for workers

in the private sector. However, the gap is larger for both groups (almost three years) if one considers paid leave only.

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

According to Eurostat statistics, levels of attendance at formal ECEC services for children both under and over three years of age had fallen due to the pandemic. For children above three it fell from 94.1 per cent in 2019 to 86.9 per cent in 2020 and 83.4 per cent in 2021. For children below three it fell from 32.4 per cent in 2019 to 21.5 per cent in 2020 but went up to 32.3 per cent in 2021. For children over three attendance is around EU average which was 83.9 per cent in 2021, while for children below three it is below EU average which was 36.2 per cent in 2021. However, attendance for thirty and more hours is much lower in Greece for children over three years of age.

### **3. Changes in policy since April 2021 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

During 2022, the key change in leave policy development concerns the expansion of the special Maternity leave for employees in the private sector, from six to nine months. An important change in the provision of this leave is that it gives the right to mothers to transfer part of this leave (up to seven months) to fathers (article 43 of the Law 4997/2022) This expansion, which comes in addition to improvements in the leave provisions that took place a year before (Law 4808/2021), has significantly expanded the length of paid leave to parents that work as employees in the private sector (two months fully paid Maternity leave, more than three and half months of fully paid Childcare leave, two months, for each parent, of Parental leave paid at minimum wage level and nine months of special Maternity leave paid at minimum wage level).

However, at the same time, gender inequality is reinforced as it expands a leave for mothers, while the foreseen transfer to fathers is a right for mothers only and it needs to be seen to what extent this will be used.

Another development that is worth mentioning is the obligation of digital recording of working time arrangements including leaves that started since the beginning of 2023.

### **4. Uptake of leave**

There is no information on the uptake of the various types of leave for 2022/3. Statistics provided by the Labour Inspectors' Authority on private sector employees record people on leave by sex; however, there is no information about how many employees are eligible, but do not make use of their entitlement. Furthermore, these statistics are collected under the equal treatment legislation and do not provide any data on the uptake of leaves that apply exclusively to mothers.

Anyhow, it seems that, based on the above reports though not publicly available since 2017, regarding leaves where both parents have entitlement rights, it is the mothers who overwhelmingly use the leaves.

The recent introduction of an obligation to digitally record leaves may fill the gap in the provision of this kind of data at least for the private sector.