

Leave policy changes: April 2021

The table below is available from the 2017 Annual Review onward. It gives a quick overview of larger policy changes in the included countries. For more information about those changes we point to the individual country notes.

The table gives an overview of policy changes according to the different types of leave distinguished in our report, i.e., Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Parental leave, as well as other statutory measures. We do not summarise changes in other policies at this point (e.g. childcare), so readers can refer to the country notes for this. For the four types of leave, **we distinguish where a policy has newly been introduced** (marked by symbol: ✓) **or where a policy has been abolished** (x). Regarding the reforms of existing policies, we distinguish three types of change: if a change can be quantified, such as an increase in the replacement rate of a leave benefit or a reduction of leave duration, we classify it as either **expansion** (↑) or **cutback** (↓). If a change cannot be easily quantified, such as a change in flexibility rules, we classify it as **recalibration** (o).

For 2021, as the previous year, it is important to note that we refer here to the **regular leave policy changes**. For special leave policies enacted under the **COVID-19 pandemic**, please consult the supplementary sections in the country notes.

Which **types of changes** have been reported in the 2021 Review of Leave Policies (i.e. policy changes enacted in the year up to April 2021)?⁷² In this year's edition of the leave review, 47 countries are included. Of those, 25 report *some* policy change (while the rest reports continuity across all types of leave), which seems roughly similar as in previous years. Some of the enacted changes are small, others target specific groups, and a few transform the main parameters of national leave systems.

⁷² Later changes that are under way but not yet enacted will be included in forthcoming review(s). In many countries, there are also on-going discussions about policy reforms, which have not been decided upon yet; these discussions are portrayed in the policy changes sections of each country note.

For Maternity leave, 10 countries report changes; also 10 for Paternity leave; and 13 for Parental leave. Changes in 9 countries concern other statutory leave measures. Compared to previous years, there was thus in 2020/21 a comparatively strong focus on reforming Paternity leave measures.

When it comes to qualifying the changes, a few **measures were newly introduced**, particularly in the area of other statutory measures. This included the introduction of **care leaves** in Belgium, as well as Switzerland; and newly introduced rights to take leave in the case of children with (serious) illnesses (e.g. in Greece). New **paternity leaves** were introduced in the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Regarding the reform of existing measures, **expansionary measures** are most widespread. As indicated above, the 2020/21 period indicates particular attention on expanded **Paternity leave** rights, including in Belgium, Estonia, France, and Spain. We also see benefit increases, e.g. concerning Maternity leave in Bulgaria, Chile, or Lithuania. Outright **retrenchment** measures seemed rarer even than in previous years; it remains to be seen whether austerity becomes a stronger driving force in leave policies after the immediate crisis responses to the pandemic.

Overview of leave policy changes in 2020/21

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Other statutory leave measures
Argentina				
Australia			o increased flexibility	
Austria				
Belgium		↑ Paternity leave		✓ care leave
Brazil				

Bulgaria	↑ benefit increase			
Canada				
China				
Chile	↑ benefit height		↑ benefit height	↑ expansion SANA law
Croatia				
Cyprus				
Czech Republic				
Denmark	✓ re-instatement of collective reimbursement fund for self-employed		✓ re-instatement of collective reimbursement fund for self-employed	
Estonia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● + 20 days; ✓ 30 days of benefit to self-employed or non-active fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o parental benefit payment x childcare benefit 	
Finland				
France		↑ 28 days from 1 July 2021		
Germany ⁷³			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Parental leave periods for early births ↑ weekly working hours threshold 	✓ special regulations due to Covid-19

⁷³ Changes effective as of 1 September 2021.

			↓ maximum income threshold ↓ eligibility period of part-time Parental leave	
Greece				↑ days of paid leave for public sector employees whose spouse/child suffers from serious illnesses or mental disability can go up from 22 to 32 days ✓ paid 6-day leave for the care of a child suffering from serious disability (public sector) ✓ paid leave for a spouse/child who suffers from cancer and needs regular treatment (2 days per treatment) (public sector)
Hungary				
Iceland			↑ 2 months for mothers ↑ 2 months for fathers	

			o Parents may transfer up to 6 weeks to the other	
Ireland			↑ Extended duration of parental leave to 26 weeks per parent (previous 22 weeks) ↑ Extended duration of parent's leave to 5 weeks per parent (previous 2 weeks)	
Israel				
Italy		↑ Paternity leave (from 7 to 10 days)		
Japan				
Korea	↑ including artists			✓ payment for 10 days family care leave
Latvia				
Lithuania				
Luxembourg				
Malta				
Mexico				
Netherlands		✓ up to 5 weeks at 70% earnings		

New Zealand			↑ length of paid leave	
Norway				
Poland				
Portugal				
Romania		↑ extended to certain public sector workers	↑ benefits for adoptive parents	
Russian Federation	↑ minimum and maximum payments		↑ minimum and maximum payments	
Serbia				
Slovakia	↑ benefit height		↑ benefit height	o sick care leave ✓ long-term sick care leave
Slovenia	↑ higher minimum compensation	↑ higher minimum compensation	↑ higher minimum compensation	↑
South Africa				
Spain		↑ 4-week prolongation		
Sweden				
Switzerland		✓ 2 weeks		✓ care leave
United Kingdom				
United States				
Uruguay				

Key:

✓ introduction, x abolishment, ↑ expansion, ↓ cutback, o recalibration