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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>291</sup>; (ii) leave arrangements for public sector employees that are covered by basic laws and the Code for Civil Servants and relevant legislation.

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<sup>291</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.

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

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

*Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- **Basic leave:** 17 weeks: 8 weeks before the birth and 9 weeks after the birth.
- It is obligatory to take all the leave.
- **Special leave:** 9 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, paid by the e-EFKA, 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 DYPA, the Public Employment Service which is, *inter alia*, the social insurance fund for income protection against unemployment. Mothers are entitled to 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.
- **Special leave:** minimum daily wage as defined by law, as well as social insurance coverage. It is funded by DYPA (Public Employment Service).
- **Basic leave:** payments are taxed. **Special leave:** payments are not taxed.
- Maternity leave (both basic and special) is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.

*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 7 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. Parents in same-sex couples have to declare which parent will make use of the leave.

- **Special leave:** those insured in e-EFKA with fixed-term or permanent contracts or self-employed, as well as farmers. Mothers acquiring children through surrogacy as well as adoptive mothers of children up to eight years old are also entitled to this benefit. Mothers can transfer up to seven months of their leave to fathers, irrespectively of the employment status of fathers. Parents in same-sex couples declare who will make use of the leave. The parent making use of the leave in same-sex couples can transfer up to seven months to the other parent.
- Self-employed women, who are directly insured in the Social Security Fund for the Self-Employed (OAEE now e-EFKA) and the United Fund for the Self-Employed (ETAA now e-EFKA), 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. 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; single 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.
- Payments are made and funded 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.

- Same-sex fathers are entitled to this leave but they have to declare who will make use of the leave.

#### *Flexibility*

- Two days can be granted before the date of expected birth and the rest should be granted fully or partially within 30 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 Public Employment Service 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 8 years of age.
- Leave may be taken in one or several periods 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 2 months from the submission of the request.

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

- All employees who have completed 1 year's continuous or consecutive fixed-term contracts with the same employer.
- Though the leave is for each child, it is necessary that 1 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.

#### *Variation in leave due to child or family reasons (e.g., multiple or premature births; poor health or disability of child or mother; single 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 2 months, 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: (i) 2 hours fewer per day for the first 12 months and 1 hour less per day for another six months; (ii) full working days that are distributed on a weekly basis; (iii) a period or equal periods of time during the 30 months 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 (iv) 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 and no reclaiming provision for the employer.
- Adoptive and foster parents are also entitled to this leave from the time the child enters the family.

#### **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 5 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 1 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 6 working days per year per parent of unpaid leave if the parent has one child; up to eight working days if they have 2 children; and up to 10 working days if they have 3 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 4 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:** 1 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:** 10 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 12 years: in addition to other leaves, 6 working days' paid leave per year. If the parent has 3 or more children, the leave is 8 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.
- **Leave for grieving parents:** Working parents, unconditionally, can obtain a 20 day paid leave in the case of the death of their child

#### *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 the employer 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. This also holds for working women in same-sex couples who bear and give birth to a child. Working fathers cannot be dismissed for six months after birth. In same sex couples, the parents declare to their employers who will make use of the protection.
- 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>292</sup>***

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

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

- Five months: 2 months before the birth and 3 months after the 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 made to the mother by the employer.
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded through general taxation.

#### *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 5 months. If the birth takes place after the time envisaged, the leave is

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<sup>292</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.

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; single 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 1 month for each additional child.
- For every child after the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the length of post-natal leave is extended by 2 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 30 days after birth.

*Payment and funding*

- One hundred per cent of earnings.
- Payments are made to the father by the employer
- Payments are taxed.
- Funded through general taxation.

*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, Paternity leave is granted for children up to 8 years old after the placement of the child in the family.

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

*Length of leave*

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

*Payment and funding*

- For employees with 1 or 2 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).



- Funded by general taxation.
- For each child, 4 months of the Parental leave are considered as real time service for pension or other purposes.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave may be taken at any time until the child turns 8 years, in one period or several periods of time or as daily reduced hours.

#### *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.

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

- In the case of 3 or more children, 3 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 2 paid months, receive the benefit for 2 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, i.e., for both length and payment.
- 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: (i) in a single continuous period of 9 months or (ii) as reduced hours of daily work, that is, 2 hours less per day until the child turns 2 years old and 1 hour less if the child is between 2 and 4 years old.
- 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 1 month if it is taken as one continuous period or by 6 months if it is taken as reduced daily hours of work. In the case of multiple births, an extra 6 months is provided for each child if it is taken as reduced daily hours of work; in the case of the birth of a 4<sup>th</sup> child, flexible working is extended by 2 years.
- Adoptive and foster parents of children up to 4 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.

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

### *Adoption leave and pay*

- Three months fully paid leave is granted to adoptive and foster parents during the first 6 months of the finalization of the foster or adoption process if the child is younger than 8 years. One of these months can be granted before the finalization of the process. Parents that obtain a child through substitute motherhood have the right to a three month fully paid leave immediately after the birth of the child.

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

- Leave for children's illness: up to 4 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has 1 or 2 children; up to 7 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has 3 children; up to 10 working days of paid leave per year if the employee has 4 or more children; and up to 8 working days of paid leave per year if the employee is a single parent. The leave constitutes an individual right. In addition, parents are entitled to 1 month of unpaid 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 4 working days of paid leave for 1 child, and up to 5 working days for 2 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 employee is 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 6 working days annually. In the case the employee cares for more than one person the leave goes up to 10 working days annually. In the case that more than one employee is entitled to this leave, the leave can go up to 10 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 to undergo fertility treatment: Working women are entitled to seven paid working days.

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

- None

#### *Flexible working*

- Employees can ask for the reduction of their hours of work by up to 50 per cent, with a reduction of their pay, for a period of up to 5 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.
- Employees with children or spouses with a disability can reduce their working time by 1 hour per day, with full recompense of pay.

All of the above provisions that address heterosexual working parents, also address same-sex working parents, who have to declare which parent will make use of each provision.

## **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 years for workers in the private sector. However, the gap is larger for both groups (almost 2.5 years for the private sector and almost 3 years for the public sector) if one considers paid leave only.

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, 83.4 per cent in 2021 and 80.5 per cent in 2022. 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 to fall again to 29.1 per cent in 2022. These percentages fall below the EU average (27 countries), which for children over three attendance was 89.2 per cent, while for children below three it was 35.9 per cent in 2022.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' in the [cross-country tables](#) at the front of the review.

### **3. Changes in policy since April 2023 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

In February 2024 an important reform took place and this was the introduction of equality in civil marriages (Law 5089/24). This meant that same-sex couples as all other parents could marry, have children and have parental rights which include leave entitlements.

Another important change is that the provision of the 9 months special Maternity leave, which is available to mothers who are employees in the private sector, has been extended to self-employed mothers and mothers who are farmers. As in the case of mothers who are employees, the law also allows these categories of mothers to transfer up to 7 months of this leave to fathers (article 151 of the Law 5078/23). With this extension a step forward with regard to the equal treatment of mothers working in the private sector was made, though some reservations have been expressed about whether gender inequality in the take-up of leave is reinforced as it is a leave for mothers who can grant part of it to fathers.

Finally, a new 20 day paid leave was introduced, without any conditions attached to it, for grieving parents who have lost a child (article 93 of the law 5018/2023).

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

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.

In any case, the available data show an overwhelming use by mothers of the fully compensated Childcare leave (see 1d). In 2022, 2 per cent of female employees in full-time employment compared to only 0.09 of per cent of male employees used this leave.

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 but the system is still far away from being fully implemented.