

Slovak Republic⁴⁸³

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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

a. Maternity leave (*materská dovolenka*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Thirty-four weeks: 6 to 8 weeks before the birth and 26 to 28 weeks following the birth.
- It is obligatory to take a period of Maternity leave, which cannot be less than 14 weeks and cannot end earlier than 6 weeks after giving birth.

Payment (applied for the whole period of Maternity leave) and funding

- Seventy-five per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance. The benefit has an upper limit of €1,994, i.e., 75 per cent of twice the national average wage from 2 years before and is adjusted automatically on an annual basis. If the maternity benefit is lower than parental allowance (see 1c), an additional payment is made to cover the difference.
- Payments are not taxed. During Maternity leave, pension contributions and health insurance contributions are paid by the state.
- Funded by the Social Insurance Agency, and financed by sickness insurance contributions. Employees contribute 1.4 per cent of their earnings, employers pay an additional 1.4 per cent of their employees' earnings. Self-

⁴⁸³ Please cite as: Dančíková, Z. (2024) 'Slovak Republic country note', in Dobrotić, I., Blum, S., Kaufman, G., Koslowski, A., Moss, P. and Valentova, M. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2024*. Available at: <http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp and r reports/>

employed workers pay 4.4 per cent of their declared earnings. Sickness insurance can also be paid on a voluntary basis.

Flexibility in use

- Leave typically starts 6 weeks, but can start as early as 8 weeks before the expected date of birth, in such cases the post-natal period of leave is shortened accordingly.
- If the mother gives birth before the expected date, she can use the remainder of her pre-natal entitlement after giving birth.
- If the mother dies, the leave and benefit can be claimed by the father.
- Employed mothers are not allowed to continue their previous employment while on maternity benefits, neither full-time nor part-time. However, they can start new employment, either with a different employer or in a new position with the same employer.⁴⁸⁴ The self-employed can continue working while on maternity benefits.

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

- To be eligible for the maternity benefit, a mother must have paid sickness insurance contributions for at least 270 days of the two years before giving birth. Time spent in secondary or tertiary education is also counted towards the 270 days, as long as the mother has already graduated and started paying sickness insurance contributions following her graduation.
- All employees pay sickness insurance contributions. The same conditions apply to the self-employed and voluntarily insured, however, the self-employed only pay sickness insurance contributions if their income was above €7,824 the previous year.
- There is no provision for same-sex couples to share leave. Under Slovak legislation same-sex couples do not have the right to marriage, civil partnership, or adoption of children.

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

- Maternity leave is extended to 37 weeks for single mothers and 43 weeks in the case of multiple births.
- In the case of a stillbirth, the mother is granted a maximum of 14 weeks of Maternity leave.

⁴⁸⁴ The Social Insurance Agency had been turning down fathers' applications for maternity benefits when they did not meet the condition of taking care of their child, due to paid work (pravnenoviny.sk (2019). *Ako dopadli žaloby otcov proti nepriznaniu dávky materské*. Available at: <https://www.pravnenoviny.sk/ako-dopadli-zaloby-otcov-proti-nepriznaniu-davky-materske>). However, new legislation has discontinued an obligation for mothers to formally transfer the care of their children into fathers' hands and should prevent the Agency from declining fathers' requests due to continuing paid work while in receipt of the maternity benefit (see also Section 3).

- If the child dies while the mother is on Maternity leave, the mother has the right to 2 more weeks of leave following the death of the child.

b. Paternity leave

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Twenty-eight weeks from the day of birth.

Payment (applied for the whole period of Paternity leave) and funding

- Two weeks of paternity benefit, to be taken within the first 6 weeks after a child is born, worth 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance. The benefit has an upper limit of €1,994, i.e., 75 per cent of twice the national average wage from 2 years before and is adjusted automatically on an annual basis.⁴⁸⁵
- While the father is on Paternity leave, the mother may be in or out of paid work, including on Parental leave; however, she is not entitled to the parental allowance. Both parents cannot receive maternity benefits for the same child at the same time. However, both parents may be on maternity benefits at the same time with different children, typically the mother with a new-born and the father with an older child.
- Taxed and funded as for Maternity leave.

Flexibility in use

- The start of the paternity benefit entitlement can be postponed if the child is hospitalized within the first 6 weeks after it was born.
- Employed fathers are not allowed to continue their previous employment while on maternity benefits, neither full-time nor part-time. However, they can start new employment, either with a different employer or in a new position with the same employer.⁴⁸⁶ Self-employed can continue working while on maternity benefits.

⁴⁸⁵ The legislation, Law on Social Insurance (*Zákon o sociálnom poistení*), does not explicitly establish a paternity benefit. Rather, it specifies that a father is entitled to a maternity benefit of two weeks within the first six weeks following the birth of his child. However, the Social Insurance Agency refers to this benefit as a paternity benefit, clarifying that the paternity benefit forms a part of the already available maternity benefit: <https://www.socpoist.sk/zivotne-situacie/tehotenstvo-materstvo/otcovske>.

⁴⁸⁶ The Social Insurance Agency had been turning down fathers' applications for maternity benefits when they did not meet the condition of taking care of their child, due to paid work (pravnenoviny.sk (2019). *Ako dopadli žaloby otcov proti nepriznaniu dávky materské*. Available at: <https://www.pravnenoviny.sk/ako-dopadli-zaloby-otcov-proti-nepriznaniu-davky-materske>). However, new legislation has discontinued an obligation for mothers to formally transfer the care of their children into fathers' hands and should prevent the Agency from declining fathers' requests due to continuing paid work while in receipt of the maternity benefit (see also section 3).

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

- To be eligible for the maternity benefit, a father must have paid contributions at least 270 days of the 2 years before starting leave as well as be insured when starting leave. If the father fulfils these conditions and takes leave within the first 6 weeks since the birth of his child, the conditions are already considered fulfilled for the remainder of his paternity leave, too. All employees pay sickness insurance contributions.
- The same conditions apply to the self-employed and voluntarily insured, however, the self-employed only pay sickness insurance contributions if their income was above €7,824 the previous year. The minimum value is linked to the average wage and adjusted automatically on an annual basis.

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 father

- Leave is extended to 31 weeks for single fathers and 37 weeks if taking care of 2 or more children.

c. Parental leave (rodičovská dovolenka) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches 3 years of age.
- Leave is an individual, non-transferable entitlement.

Payment and funding

- Parental allowance (*rodičovský príspevok*) of €473 per month is available to all parents who meet the eligibility conditions, whether they take Parental leave or not. It can only be claimed by one parent at a time and by a parent who previously received the maternity benefit. Parents who did not receive the maternity benefit are entitled to a parental allowance of €345 a month.
- Fathers are entitled to 28 weeks non-transferable maternity benefit⁴⁸⁷ (i.e., 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance and with an upper limit of €1,994). However, mothers and fathers cannot draw on their respective maternity benefits at the same time for the same child, except for the 2 weeks of Paternity leave in the 6 weeks after the child is born; this

⁴⁸⁷ In legal terms, fathers in Slovakia are entitled to maternity benefits, rather than paternity benefits, see also previous footnote.

means the remaining 26 weeks of 'maternity benefit' can only be used by fathers in the Parental leave period after the end of Maternity leave.

- If the paternity benefit is lower than parental allowance (see 1c), an additional payment is made to cover the difference.
- Payments are not taxed. The state pays pension and health insurance contributions for 1 stay-at-home parent taking care of a child until the age of 6 years, when compulsory primary education begins.
- Funded by general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Parents can agree with their employer on an extension of parental leave until their child reaches the age of 5 years.
- Parents can work full-time or part-time while receiving the parental allowance.
- While both parents can take Parental leave at the same time, only one parent is entitled to the parental allowance at the same time, even with multiple young children present in the family. Parents are also not entitled to the parental allowance when one of them receives the maternity benefit, unless the maternity benefit is lower than the parental allowance. In that case, a lower parental benefit is paid, so that the total sum received by the parent is equal to the parental allowance.
- Parental leave can be repeatedly interrupted and restarted.

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

- Parents must be permanent or temporary residents of the Slovak Republic when claiming the parental allowance in order to be eligible.
- Parents' spouses are also eligible, if living in the same household.
- To be eligible for Parental leave, parents must be employed.
- Parental allowance is provided from the birth of the child, if parents are not eligible for the maternity benefit.
- Parental allowance is not provided to parents if another child of theirs has been removed from their personal care.

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

- Parental leave and parental allowance can be extended until the child reaches the age of 6 years if the child has a long-term health problem or disability, upon agreement with the employer, this can be extended until the child reaches the age of eight.
- Parental allowance is increased by 25 per cent per child in the case of multiple births.
- Parental allowance is reduced by 50 per cent for at least three months if any older child under parental responsibility is absent from compulsory education for at least three months.

- If the child dies while either parent is on Parental leave, the parent has the right to 2 more weeks of leave following the death of the child, though not beyond the day the child would have reached the age of one.
- If the parents separate, only 1 has the right to the parental allowance, even if both take care of the child.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other types of leave and flexible working

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive and foster parents are entitled to 28 weeks of Maternity leave and benefits (31 weeks for single parents, and 37 weeks for parents taking over care of at least two children). The leave can be used until the child reaches the age of 3 years.
- Adoptive and foster parents also have the right to three years of Parental leave starting from the end of Maternity leave or the day when they take the child into their care, if the child is already older than three years of age. The leave can be used only until the child reaches the age of 6 years. If the child is suffering from long-term health problems, Parental leave can last up to 6 years, but only until the child reaches the age of 6 years. Parental allowance for adoptive and foster parents can be paid for a maximum of 3 years.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees can take leave to take care of a sick relative at home (*ošetrovanie člena rodiny*), including a sick child, or to take care of a child under the age of 11 years (or 18 years if the child is suffering from long-term health problems) for other reasons (e.g., if the child's school is closed). The length of leave is not limited. However, insured parents only receive an earnings-related benefit (*ošetrovné*) paid at 55 per cent of their previous daily earnings for a maximum of 14 calendar days. There is no limit to the number of episodes per year, if these do not exceed 14 days each.
- Insured parents are also entitled to a long-term benefit to care for a child in need of home care following a hospital stay or palliative care. The benefit amounts to 55 per cent of their previous daily earnings for a maximum of 90 calendar days and can be split between the parents.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers of children under the age of 6 months are entitled to 2 30 minute breaks for breastfeeding per child per full working day. Mothers of children aged between 6 and 12 months are entitled to one 30 minute breastfeeding

break a day. Mothers working at least 4 hours a day have the right to 1 break a day per child until their child reaches 6 months. The break time is paid.

Flexible working

- Pregnant women, as well as women and men taking care of children below the age of 15 may ask their employer for shorter working hours. Employers may decline the request due to serious operational reasons.

Other measures

- A childcare allowance (*Príspevok na starostlivosť o dieťa*) is available to cover some of the costs of childcare of children up to the age of three (or six in the case of a child with a long-term health problem or disability). It is available to one of the parents, including adoptive and foster parents, if they work or are enrolled in secondary or tertiary education. Parents are not entitled to the childcare allowance if in receipt of the maternity benefit or the parental allowance at the same time for any child. The allowance is provided in three forms. An allowance of up to €80 per month is paid when childcare is provided by a kindergarten included in the official network of schools and school facilities. An allowance covering declared costs up to €280 per month is paid when childcare is provided by other official providers. Finally, an allowance of €41 is paid when childcare is provided by other persons or relatives.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, 13 months paid at a high rate, the remainder at a low flat rate. Children are entitled to a place in kindergarten starting from the September after they reached the age of 3 years. Attending kindergarten becomes compulsory from the September after they reached the age of 5 years. Children start school from the September after they reach the age of six years.

There is a shortage of kindergarten places, and with priority being given to 5 year-olds, many parents of younger children struggle to obtain a place, though availability varies with region.^{488,489} To address the shortage, construction of new kindergartens is underway, supported by €82.5 million set aside by the EU-funded Recovery and Resilience Plan.⁴⁹⁰ Inadequate numbers of teachers posing an

⁴⁸⁸ Varsik, S. (2019) *Držím ti miesto. Komentár 2/2019*. Inštitút vzdelávacej politiky. Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/komentar-022019-drzim-ti-miesto/>

⁴⁸⁹ Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Index dostupnosti materských škôl. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4usw8nw8>.

⁴⁹⁰ Mogilevskaia, A. (2024) 'O miesta v škôlkach je bitka, obce nové nestavajú'. [There is a battle for places in kindergartens, municipalities are not building new ones]. *Pravda*, 28

additional obstacle. Significant progress has been made in extending the capacities in select municipalities, but the overall implementation of ECEC expansion is still insufficient.⁴⁹¹

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)

Maternity benefit caps and parental allowance increased automatically from January 2024. The maternity benefit cap was raised in line with wage growth from €1,851 to €1,994. Parliament also passed an increase in the parental allowance from August 2023, from €413 to €473 for parents who previously received the maternity benefit, and from €301 to €345 for those who did not.

Eligibility criteria for maternity benefits were revised from January 2024 to increase eligibility of recent students. Before the change, mothers were entitled to maternity benefits if they had been making employment-related or voluntary sickness insurance contributions for a minimum of 270 days. Since January 2024, time spent in full-time education is also counted towards the 270 days, as long as the mother has already graduated and started paying sickness insurance contributions. The change does not apply to fathers.

In May 2023, parliament passed a guarantee of a kindergarten place for children who have reached 4 years of age by the start of the school year from September 2024 and 3 years of age by the start of the school year from September 2025.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nearly all eligible mothers take Maternity leave as it is obligatory. The number of fathers accessing maternity benefits had also been growing fast. A 2020 analysis of administrative data showed quickly rising uptake of maternity benefits by fathers. While in 2018 fathers of 10,000 children took leave, amounting to 17 per cent compared to the number of children born during this period, in the first half of 2019 already fathers of 6,500 children took leave, amounting to 24 per cent. Fathers took leave more often when they had higher income, when 1 or both

January 2024. Available at: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/697447-nehcu-obce-stavat-skolky-podla-druckera-ich-musi-rezort-presviedcat-potrebuje-financie-a-menej-byrokracie-odkazuju-samospravy/>

⁴⁹¹ RTVS (2023) 'Miesta v škôlkach budú zrejme naďalej chýbať. Najťažšie ich hľadajú rodičia v Bratislavskom kraji' [Places in kindergartens will probably continue to be lacking. Parents in the Bratislava region are looking for them the hardest]. RTVS, 23 October 2023. Available at: <https://spravy.rtvsk.sk/2023/10/miesta-v-skolkach-budu-zrejme-nadalej-chybat-najtazsie-ich-hladaju-rodicia-v-bratislavskom-kraji/>.

parents had completed education or when they were self-employed.⁴⁹² A 2022 report from the Ministry of Finance showed a fall in the number of fathers making use of their benefits by a third compared to 2019⁴⁹³. However, the drop may have been linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Finance anticipated the number of fathers taking leave will start growing again and reach 2019 levels by 2025.

Compared to mothers, fathers' leave-taking is still limited. Since 2023, regular official statistics on the uptake of maternity benefits are published. However, data is only published on the number of monthly benefits paid to mothers and fathers, providing information on the share of time they both received benefits, there is no information on the numbers of mothers and fathers who make use of the benefits overall, even if for a short period. Between January 2023 and February 2024, the proportion of maternity benefits paid out to fathers fluctuated between 5 and 6.4 per cent, the remaining 93.6-95 per cent were paid out to mothers.⁴⁹⁴

b. Paternity leave

While fathers are entitled to Paternity leave, in practice, they are more likely to combine their use of dedicated benefits with Parental leave (see 1b and 1c), as the timing of Paternity leave overlaps with Maternity leave, and both parents cannot draw on dedicated benefits at the same time. No data is available on fathers' use of Paternity leave (for fathers' use of associated benefits, see 4a).

c. Parental leave

There is no information available on Parental leave use. Parental allowance is paid to most families unless they opt for the childcare allowance (see 1c). Data on the number of recipients of the Parental leave allowance is only available on a monthly basis. In February 2024, the most recent month for which data was available at the time of writing, the allowance was paid to 136,074 parents; 130,759 of whom were women (i.e., 96 per cent, similar to the figure reported the year before).⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² Dančíková, Z. (2020) Ani muži nemôžu mať všetko [Not even men can have everything]. *Komentár IFP 2020/06*. Available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/financie/institut-financnej-politiky/publikacie-ifp/komentare/komentare-z-roku-2020/6-ani-muzi-nemozu-mat-vsetko-materska-otcov-nastup-matiek-do-prace-jun-2020.html>

⁴⁹³ Horváthová, V. and Salamonová, A. (2022) *Zima stale pod vplyvom pandémie* [Winter still under the influence of the pandemic]. Available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/files/archiv/4/Zima-stale-pod-vplyvom-pandemie.pdf>

⁴⁹⁴ Sociálna poisťovňa [Social Insurance Agency] *Priemerný mesačný počet vyplatených nemocenských dávok* [Average monthly number of paid sickness benefits]. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/soy9m9y>

⁴⁹⁵ Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny (UPSVaR) [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family] (2024) *Mesačná štatistika o počte poberateľov sociálnych dávok a dotácií a čerpaných finančných prostriedkoch* [Monthly statistics on the number of recipients of social benefits and subsidies and funds drawn]. Available at: https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/statistiky/socialne-veci-statistiky/2024/2024-socialne-davky.html?page_id=1334696.