

Croatia¹

Ivana Dobrotić (University of Zagreb)

April 2017

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 (*rodiljni dopust*); Maternity exemption from work (*rodiljna poštuda od rada*); Maternity care for the child (*rodiljna briga o novorođenom djetetu*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- *Maternity leave*: 28 days before the expected day of birth, then until the child turns six months of age. It is obligatory for mother to take 98 days (28 days before the expected date of delivery and 70 days after the birth), without interruption. In exceptional circumstances, based on a medical assessment, leave can start 45 days before the expected date of delivery.
Maternity exemption from work/Maternity care for the child: from the day of birth until the child turns six months of age.

Payment and funding

- *Maternity leave*: 100 per cent of average earnings, calculated on the average earnings on which health care contributions were paid during the six months prior to the leave, with no ceiling on payments.
- A parent who does not meet the condition of at least 12 months of continual insurance or 18 months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years receives 50 per cent of the 'budgetary base rate' of HRK3,326[€448]² per month; the gross average earnings in 2016 were HRK 7,752[€1,045]³.
- *Maternity exemption from work/Maternity care for the child*: 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate per month
- Funded from general taxation.

¹ Please cite as: Dobrotić, I. (2016) 'Croatia country note', in: Blum S., Koslowski A., and Moss P. (eds.) International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2017. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

² Conversion of currency undertaken on 21st June 2017, using: <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter>

³ See: <http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/subjects.htm>

- Pension rights: employed parents on Maternity leave maintain their pension insurance and the contributions are paid by the state on the level of Maternity benefit; unemployed and inactive parents entitled to Maternity exemption from work/Maternity care for the child have the right on pension insurance paid by the state until the child turns one year of age (if there is the second child born within this first year, the pension insurance based on the birth of the first child stops, and one-year pension insurance based on the birth of the second child begins)

Flexibility in use

- *Maternity leave*: after the compulsory Maternity leave period, the father of the child has the right to use the remaining period of Maternity leave, if the mother agrees.
- After the compulsory Maternity leave, a parent can use the remaining period of leave on a part-time basis, in which case the duration is doubled with compensation at half the level of full-time leave. The period of part-time leave taken after a child is six months cannot exceed the period of part-time leave taken before the child reaches this age; the maximum period of part-time leave is until nine months after birth.
- *Maternity exemption from work/Maternity care for the child*: from the 71st day and in the case of the mother starting employment, the mother can terminate the use of Maternity exemption from work/Maternity care for the child, in which case the father of the child has the right to use the remaining share of the unused leave, if the mother agrees.

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

- *Maternity leave*: all employed and self-employed persons.
- *Maternity exemption from work*: parents employed on a different employment basis (e.g. parents who are earning a second income on which contributions have been paid), farmers and unemployed parents; they must be registered in the unemployment office, have health insurance and permanent residency (i.e. citizen or foreign citizen with permanent residency of at least three years in Croatia)
- *Maternity care for the child*: parents outside the labour system, due for example to retirement, incapacity or studying; they must have health insurance and five years residency (citizen or foreign citizen with permanent residency of at least five years in Croatia)

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 cases of poor health or health risks for the mother and child, the pregnant mother is entitled to sick leave before birth for the duration of the risk ('sick leave due to illness and complications related to pregnancy'), in addition to Maternity leave. The mother is paid 100 per cent with a ceiling of HRK4,257[€574] a month.
- Leave is extended in the case of premature births.
- If the parent taking leave dies or is for any other justified reason unable to exercise the right, leave can be transferred to the other parent.

b. Paternity leave

- No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave (*roditeljski dopust*) / Parental exemption from work (*roditeljska poštuda od rada*) / Parental care for the child (*roditeljska briga o novorođenom djetetu*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy)

Length of leave

- *Parental leave*: four months (120 calendar days) per parent per child for the first and second born child; see 'variation in leave' below for third or higher order births. Leave is an individual entitlement, but two months can be transferred from one parent to the other.
- *Parental exemption from work/Parental care for the child*: from six months of age until the child turns one year of age, for the first and second born child; or until the child turns three years of age for twins, the third and every subsequent child.

Payment and funding

- *Parental leave*: 100 per cent of average earnings for the first six months, with a ceiling of 80 per cent of the budgetary base rate⁴ or eight months if both parents use Parental leave; 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate after the first six (or eight) months or if parents do not fulfil the condition of at least 12 months of continual insurance period or 18 months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years.
- *Parental exemption from work/Parental care for the child*: 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate.
- Funded from general taxation.
- Pension rights: employed parents on Parental leave maintain their pension insurance and the contributions are paid by the state on the level of Parental benefit (as there is a low ceiling for Parental benefit, parents with higher salaries are left without an important part of their contributions); unemployed and inactive parents entitled to Parental exemption from work/Parental care for the child have the right on pension insurance paid by the state until the child turns one year of age (if there is the second child born within this first year, the pension insurance based on the birth of the first child stops, and one-year pension insurance based on the birth of the second child begins).

Flexibility in use

- *Parental leave*:
 - Leave is a personal right of both parents but one parent can transfer two months of their entitlement to the other, if they are both employed and if both parents agree and with written consent.
 - Parents can use their entitlement at the same time or consecutively. (Although this possibility was deleted in the new legislation, legal opinion holds that parents can still use leave that way as long as not explicitly forbidden by law).
 - Leave can be taken in the following ways: a) fully (in one period); b) partially (no more than two times per year, each time for no less than 30

⁴ The budgetary base rate amounts to HRK3,326[€448] per month.

days); c) part-time (duration is doubled and compensation is 50 per cent of the compensation for full-time leave).

- Leave can be taken until the child turns eight years of age.
- *Parental exemption from work/Parental care for the child:* if a parent terminates their leave due to employment/self-employment, the other parent has the right to use the unused share of the first parent's leave with that parent's consent.

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

- *As for Maternity 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

- Fifteen months (450 days) per parent for twins, other multiple births and the third and every subsequent child. This leave is transferable from one parent to another and paid at 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate.
- If the parent taking leave dies or is for any other justified reason unable to exercise the right, leave can be transferred to the other parent.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- If parents have fully used Maternity and Parental leave, one of the employed parents has the right not to work until the child turns three years of age. During that time, the parent's rights and obligations regarding his/her employment are suspended, and the rights to compulsory health insurance and retirement insurance are maintained. This is unpaid, and contributions for pensions and healthcare are not paid during that period.
- Regional/local variations: In 2016, the City of Zagreb introduced a cash-for-care scheme for parents of three or more children (they have the right to so called "parent-caregiver" status). Eligible are unemployed parents with at least one child of pre-school age, with Croatian citizenship and uninterrupted five-year residency in the City of Zagreb before the birth. Children cannot attend ECEC programmes if parents apply for this allowance. The allowance is ca. 520€ per month (ca. 65 per cent of average net wage and 150 per cent of minimum wage) and it may be paid until the youngest child in the family turns 15.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- Employed/self-employed adoptive parents can take adoption leave (providing the spouse of the adoptive parent is not the parent of the child) of six months per family for an adopted child under 18 years of age, paid as for Maternity leave. Adoption leave is extended for 60 days in the case of the adoption of twins or a child that is the third child or any subsequent child in the family, or of a child with developmental difficulties. After this period of leave, the adoptive parents of a child under eight years of age have the right to Parental leave of six months until the child turns eight years of age and all other rights of employed/self-employed parents.

- In the case of other adoptive parents (i.e. not employed or self-employed), one adoptive parent has the right to adoption leave (providing the spouse of the adoptive parent is not the parent of the child) of 12 months (regardless of the child's age). Adoption leave is extended for 60 days in the case of the adoption of twins, two or more children or a child that is the third child or any subsequent child in the family, or of a child with developmental difficulties. Unused leave can be transferred to the other adoptive parent on resumption of employment/self-employment under the same condition as Parental exemption from work/Parental care for the child. Payment is at 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate.

Time off for the care of dependants

- There is an entitlement to leave if a co-resident spouse or child is ill, with length and payment depending on the child's age: for a child under three years, up to 60 working days per family for each illness at 100 per cent of average earnings; for a child aged three to seven years, 70 per cent of average earnings (minimum of 25 per cent of budgetary base rate); for a child aged seven to 18 years, up to 40 working days for each illness at 70 per cent of average earnings (minimum of 25 per cent of budgetary base rate); older child and co-resident spouse, up to 20 working days for each illness at 70 per cent of average earnings, but only for serious medical conditions defined by regulation (minimum of 25 per cent of budgetary base rate). Leave for children under the 18 years of age can be extended on the basis of medical committee decision, and can be used only if the other co-resident parent is in employment or if a parent lives alone with a child (e.g. single parents, divorced parents). All payments subject to a ceiling of HRK4,257[€574] per month. It can be used on part-time basis.
- A worker has the right to seven days fully paid leave per year for important personal needs, including those related to marriage, childbirth, or the serious illness of a member of the immediate family.

Flexible working

- During the first 12 months after the child's birth, mothers employed full time and who are breastfeeding are entitled to two hours absence from work (once a day for two hours or two times a day for one hour), paid at 100 per cent of the budgetary base rate, recalculated to the hourly rate.
- After Parental leave, one of the employed/self-employed parents has the right to work shorter hours until a child turns three years of age if the child requires increased care due to its health and development, and only if Parental leave was fully used; paid at 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate (recalculated to the hourly rate, only for the hours outside the work).
- Employed or self-employed parents of a child with a serious developmental problem, including physical disability, have the right to take leave to care for the child or to work shorter hours until the child is eight years old. Parents can then work shorter hours, until the child finishes regular education. Payment during this period is: a) during leave, 65 per cent of the budgetary base rate if beneficiary has 12 months of continual insurance period or 18 months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years, otherwise 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate; b) during shorter working hours, the difference in salary if the beneficiary has 12 months of continual insurance period or 18 months of insurance with interruptions in the last two years, otherwise 50 per cent of the budgetary base rate recalculated to the hourly rate.

Specific provision for (breast-)feeding

- If an employed pregnant woman or mother breastfeeding her child works on a job that is harmful to her health and the health of a child she is breastfeeding, and if the employer has not provided for her another position within the company, she has the right to leave at full earnings paid by the employer.

Prenatal examinations (slobodan radni dan za prenatalni pregled)

- Pregnant workers have a right to use a number of hours - equivalent to one working day off per month - in order to attend prenatal examinations. Pregnant worker is obliged to announce to the employer the intention to use this right (in a written form, two days in advance)

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Croatia is 12 or 14 months (depending on whether both parents use leave entitlements) for the first and second born child, or three years for twins, other multiple births and the third and every subsequent child; this is paid at 100 per cent of previous average earnings up to a low ceiling for Parental leave (flat-rate for self-employed parents who do not fulfil eligibility criteria, and unemployed or inactive parents). There is an entitlement to ECEC a year before entering a primary school, for at least 250 hours as preparation for school; attendance is obligatory. This is only a preschool program of short duration. Levels of attendance at formal services are well below the average for the countries included in this review. Croatia is not included in the comparative data on ECEC attendance in the OECD Family Database. It does, however, appear in the TransMonEE Database covering countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Individual States; according to this Database, levels of attendance at formal services in Croatia for children under and over three years are below the average for the countries included in this review and OECD countries (for more details see Table 'Relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements').

3. Changes in policy since April 2016 (including proposals currently under discussion)

In 2016, the City of Zagreb introduced a cash-for-care scheme for parents of three or more children (they have the right to so called "parent-caregiver" status; see 1d for more details). It is the first measure of this type in Croatia, while its introduction was a clear expression of pre-election populism. The measure was introduced by the mayor of Zagreb in the pre-election campaign for parliamentary elections. He clearly stated through the campaign that if he wins, he plans to introduce this measure at national level. It also seems, that the measure was introduced to prevent further strikes of preschool educators who started to complain about working conditions (particularly to big educational groups in ECEC), so one of the conditions within this measure is that parents have to withdraw a child from the ECEC program, while simultaneously the city allowed to employ additional educators in childcare. Until 11 May 2017, 3,015 parents asked for this status (2,569 were approved, and others are still in procedure; around 10 per cent are fathers)⁵. While there is no reliable data, media reported that more than 1,200 children were withdraw from ECEC. The

⁵ Data reported by the City of Zagreb at a roundtable attended by the author.

amount of allowance is attractive to parents of lower socio-economic status (it exceeds the minimum wage and parental benefits/allowances) and with precarious position at the labour market.

Currently, new amendments to The Maternity and Parental Benefits Act are discussed, which ask for the increase of parental benefits and Maternity/Parental allowances. The low level of parental benefits has been problematized by experts already for several years, and their increase was also a measure proposed by the working group who worked on the proposal of new family policy strategy under the 2011-2016 government. This government did not make a new proposal, but as a result the increase of parental benefits became one of the main measures advocated within the pre-election campaign of most political parties running for parliament. When the new government was formed in October 2016 that was one of the first proposals which went into the procedure. It is planned to increase the ceiling on parental benefit from 80 per cent to 120 per cent of the budgetary base rate (i.e. from HRK2,660 [€355] to HRK3,991 [€532] per month), and the flat-rate amount of parental allowance paid to inactive and unemployed parents from 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the budgetary base rate (i.e. from HRK1,663[224.34] to HRK2,328[314.05] per month). These changes should become effective in July 2017, and they will apply to all parents, regardless if they already exercise the rights. However, it seems that these changes are not going to apply to parents with precarious position at the labour market, i.e. to those who do not fulfil the insurance criteria. It was also stated that the further plan is to completely abolish ceiling on earnings-related Parental benefit, and that they are not going to abolish it now due to budgetary constraints.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

There is no official information on what proportion of women and men take Maternity leave. Although there is the possibility for fathers to use part of Maternity leave (if mothers agree), official data show that Maternity leave is predominantly used by mothers. According to the latest information, for 2015, fathers used the transferred right in 0.3 per cent of cases. *Maternity exemption from work* is predominantly used by mothers, i.e. only 0.1 per cent of fathers exercised this right in 2015⁶.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement.

c. Parental leave

There is no official information on take-up rates. Parental leave is also predominantly used by mothers. According to the latest official data, for 2015, fathers account for 4.54 per cent of all Parental leave taken.⁷

5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2016

⁶ <http://www.prs.hr/attachments/article/1923/lzvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20radu%20Pravobraniteljice%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova%20za%202015.pdf>

⁷ Ibid.

Please be aware that this is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all publications or research in this area for this country. If you are aware of a publication or research that could be listed in this section, please contact the country note author(s) so that they can include it for the following year.

a. General overview

Studies have addressed welfare state attitudes towards childcare, leave policies and active fathering.

b. Selected publications since April 2016

Dobrotić, I. and Vučković Juroš, T. (2016) Who Should Finance Childcare? Multilevel Analysis of 24 Countries, *Journal of Croatian Social Policy*, 23(3): 323-357.

This paper examines how the individual and country-level factors affect the childcare financing attitudes, particularly the effect of socialization in a particular welfare regime. This area of research is fraught with methodological and conceptual issues, including the over-reliance on Esping-Andersen's regime typology. Therefore, the authors also investigate whether a more family-policy-nuanced categorization of welfare regimes better accounts for the cross-country variations in childcare attitudes. Using the 2012 ISSP data, the authors conducted the multilevel analysis of 24 European countries, and while the effect of most predictors is generally consistent with the previous research, this study's most important finding is that the alternative Leitner's "Varieties of Familialism" typology better accounts for the cross-national variations in childcare attitudes than the classical Esping-Anderson's typology. This speaks of the importance of a programmatic approach in the welfare state attitudes analysis which links the public support for specific social programs to its unique characteristics.

Jugović, I. (2016) Beliefs about the Gender Division of Parental Leave and the Characteristics Associated with it, *Journal of Croatian Social Policy*, 23(3): 359-382.

The paper explores beliefs about Parental/Maternity leave and factors explaining these beliefs. The data was gathered on a nationally representative sample of people living in Croatia (N=1000). Participants were asked questions about their beliefs towards Parental leave take-up by the mother and the father, their socio-demographic data, attendance of religious services, partners' income disparity and gender-role beliefs. The results show that around 49 per cent of both men and women believe that it is solely the mother's responsibility to use the entire leave, an additional 27 per cent believe that the father should take some part of the leave, and around 24 per cent believe that parents should share the leave equally. Men and women who support more equally shared leave take-up attend religious services less often and hold more egalitarian beliefs about gender division of labour, but do not differ in partners' income disparity. These results imply that gender ideology theory is more applicable in the explanation of beliefs about the gender division of Parental leave compared to time-allocation theory. Results of the multinomial logistic regressions show that the strongest predictor of the belief about leave take-up is the gender-role belief. The less the participants believe that the gender division of labour should be traditionally divided, the more likely they are to support equally shared leave between parents. The implication of these findings is that shifts towards supporting gender egalitarian leave take-up will most likely not occur until the attitudes toward gender roles become more egalitarian in general.

Maskalan, A. (2016) In the Name of the Father: A Discussion on (New) Fatherhood, Its Assumptions and Obstacles, *Croatian Journal of Social Policy*, 23(3): 383-398.

Deliberation on the concepts of father and fatherhood and their literal and symbolic meanings makes the starting point of this paper. Furthermore, a short historical overview is combined with selected theories of fatherhood, which serve as a framework for placing the issues regarding modern fatherhood in the appropriate context. That context, it is concluded, rests on the historical interdependence of fatherhood, masculine identity and political power where traditional determinants of masculinity, such as aggressiveness and emotional detachment, represent a major obstacle to the fulfilling and positive father-child relationship. That relationship is partially discussed in relation to the concept of equal parental partnership, implying not only the new forms of fatherhood but the new forms of masculine identity as well. Unfortunately, there are still many obstacles to modern fatherhood, the most important one being gender inequality manifested through traditional male breadwinner and female child-rearer models. Subsequently data is provided on values and practices of Croatian men and women regarding childcare, that were collected and analysed in 2013 as part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and its survey on family and changing gender roles. The arising conclusion is that although many positive changes have been made the Croatian society has got a long way to go to both equal parenting and gender equality. Also, it is important to note that as a subject of political and legal controversy fatherhood cannot and must not be considered independently of the wider gender issues regarding motherhood, social status of men and women, as well as socio-economic assumptions of both fatherhood and motherhood.

c. Ongoing research

None reported.