

# Greece<sup>1</sup>

**Evi Hatzivarnava-Kazassi** and **Maria Karamessini** (Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University)

April 2018

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, 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 Department of Labour, Social Security and Welfare)***

#### **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: eight weeks must be taken before birth and nine weeks after birth. It is obligatory to take leave.
- Special leave: six months, granted after the basic Maternity leave and before the beginning of the use of flexible working (reduced hours of daily 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 IKA, the

<sup>1</sup> Please cite as: Hatzivarnava-Kazassi, E. and Karamessini, M. (2018) 'Greece country note', in Blum, S., Koslowski, A., Macht, A. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Available at: [http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp\\_and\\_r\\_reports/](http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/)

<sup>2</sup> Provisions on leave arrangements are also included in other kinds of Collective Labour Agreements (i.e. sectoral, professional, enterprise), which are signed between Employers and Confederations of large sub-sectors of the economy such as the bank sector or enterprises of the wider public sector such as 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.

social insurance fund of all employees working under private law contracts, i.e. in effect, there is a ceiling on payment. The leave is funded by IKA and OAED, the Manpower Employment Organisation which is, *inter alia*, the social insurance fund for income protection against unemployment.

- Special leave: minimum daily wage agreed in the National General Collective Agreement and lately determined by law, as well as social insurance coverage. It is funded by OAED.
- 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 birth takes place before the time envisaged, the rest of the leave can be granted after birth so long as the total time taken remains 17 weeks.
- Special leave: if the parent, with the employer's agreement, makes use of the right to take a continuous time off work instead of working reduced hours (see 1ie), then the 'special leave for the protection of maternity' is taken after this leave.

#### *Eligibility*

- Basic leave: to ensure full compensation, 200 working days during the previous two years, irrespective of whether on a fixed term or permanent contracts. Mothers acquiring children through surrogate motherhood are also entitled to receive the post-natal part of leave.
- Special leave: those insured in IKA-ETAM (the largest Social Insurance Fund) with fixed term or permanent contracts. Mothers acquiring children through surrogate motherhood are also entitled to receive this leave.
- 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 who are 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 due to pregnancy and maternity. In the first case the benefit is €150 per month while 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 surrogate motherhood 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 Γέννησης Τέκνου)**

- Two working days at the time of the child's birth, paid by the employer.

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

#### *Length of leave*

- Four months per child for each parent. Leave is an individual entitlement that cannot be transferred.

#### *Payment and funding*

- None.
- Working parents taking Parental leave have full insurance coverage on the condition that they pay the full insurance contribution (of both the employee and the employer). The Parental leave time is considered as a time of insurance for both the establishment of the pension right and the determination of the amount of pension.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave may be taken up to the time the child turns six years.
- Leave may be taken in one or several blocks of time subject to agreement with the employer.
- If both parents work for the same employer, they cannot take leave at the same time and must decide together who is to use the leave first and for how long. The law does not specify whether parents working for different employers can take leave at the same time, but as leave is unpaid it is unlikely that both parents would take it together.

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

- All employees who have completed one year's continuous or non-continuous employment with their present employer irrespective of the type of contract they have (full-time, part-time, fixed-term or any other type of contract)
- 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.
- Leave is granted by the employer according to a set of priorities: requests for Parental leave from parents of children with a disability or 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) are dealt with as an absolute priority. So, though the employer cannot refuse Parental leave, he/she can negotiate with the employee to take it later if there other employees falling in the priority criteria that request the leave at the same time.
- Non-biological parents in same-sex couples are not eligible for this 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*

- As leave is per child, the leave period is doubled for parents of twins and tripled for triplets.
- In the case of the death of one parent or the total removal of parental responsibility or non-recognition of a child, the amount of Parental leave granted to the other parent is double.
- Parents with a disabled child do not get additional Parental leave, but are eligible for carer's leave (see 1ie below).

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

- None.

#### **d. Childcare leave or career breaks**

- A parent can take time off work with full payment, up to an estimated three and three-quarter months, as part of a scheme which also allows parents to work reduced hours. For more details, see 1ie, 'flexible working'.

#### **e. Other employment-related measures**

##### *Adoption leave and pay*

- For parents who adopt or foster a child younger than six years of age (with an extension to eight years of age if adoption or fostering procedures are not finished), the same regulations for Parental leave apply as for other parents.

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

- 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 he/she has two children and up to 14 working days if he/she has more than three children. The leave is also granted for other dependent members of the family (e.g. a disabled spouse or adult children as well as disabled parents or unmarried sisters if their annual income is less than the basic income of an unskilled worker).
- Leave for visiting children's school: four working days paid leave per year per parent for each child that attends school up to the age of 16, funded by the employer.
- Leave for parents of children with disability: one hour per day, if the parent asks for it (unpaid and only applied in enterprises with more than 50 employees).
- Leave for parents whose children (up to 18 years of age) need regular transfusion or dialysis or suffer from cancer or need a transplant: up to ten working days per year paid leave, funded by the employer. Individual right. Parents of children up to 18 years of age who suffer from heavy mental retardation or Down syndrome or autism are also entitled to this leave.
- Leave for parents due to the hospitalisation of a child (up to 18 years of age), which requires their immediate presence: up to 30 working days per year unpaid leave on the condition that the parent has exhausted his/her normal Parental leave. Individual right.
- Leave for widows/ers or unmarried parents caring for children: in addition to other leave, six working days per year paid leave. If the parent has three or more children the leave is eight working days per year. The leave payment is funded by the employer.

##### *Flexible working*

- Parents are entitled to work one hour less per day for up to 30 months after Maternity leave, with full earnings replacement. This is a family right and both working parents have an independent right in the use of this leave after deciding who and for how long each will take the leave. If both parents are employees, they address a common declaration to their respective employers, specifying which parent is to use the entitlement; if parents plan to share it, they specify the period each one will use it within the total entitlement period. The entitlement is granted to fathers in cases where

the mother is self-employed but not if she is not working. This may be taken as: two hours less per day for the first 12 months and one hour less per day for another six months; or, with the employer's agreement, in block(s) of time of equal time value within the 30 months period after Maternity leave. This last option, of converting reduced hours into a block or blocks of leave, means that a parent can take a number of months off work, up to an estimated three and three-quarter months. This leave – titled 'alternative use of reduced hours as leave for the care of children' – is considered part of working time and paid and funded by the employer with no ceiling on payment (funded by the employer).

- Adoptive parents of children up to the age of six are entitled to flexible working or a childcare leave (see 1id).

## ***ii. Public sector (responsibility of the Department of Interior)<sup>3</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 leave.

#### *Payment and funding*

- Hundred per cent of earnings, with no ceiling in payment.
- Maternity leave is fully insured and gives entitlement to full pension rights.
- Funded through general taxation.

#### *Flexibility in use*

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

- Childbearing mothers who need special therapy and have exhausted their sick leave are granted paid childbearing leave.
- In the case of multiple births, Maternity leave after 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 Γέννησης Τέκνου)**

- Two working days paid leave at the time of the child's birth, funded by the employer.

---

<sup>3</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.

### **c. Parental leave (Άδεια χωρίς αποδοχές)<sup>4</sup>**

#### *Length of leave*

- Up to five years per parent. Leave is an individual entitlement that cannot be transferred.

#### *Payment and funding*

- None, except for the case of three or more children where three months of the leave are fully paid by the employer and funded through general taxation.
- Working parents taking Parental leave have full insurance coverage on the condition that they pay the full insurance contribution (of both the employee and the employer). The Parental leave time is considered as a time of insurance for both the establishment of the pension right and the determination of the amount of pension.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Leave may be taken at any time up to the time the child turns six years.
- The law does not specify whether parents working for the public sector can take leave at the same time, but as leave is unpaid it is unlikely that both parents would take it together.

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

- An employee can use this leave if his/her spouse does not make use of the childcare leave at the same time (see 1iid below).
- An employee can make use of this leave even if his/her spouse is not working
- In cases of separation, divorce, widowhood or birth without marriage, only the parent that cares for the child is entitled to this leave.
- Non-biological parents in same-sex couples are not eligible for this 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*

- In the case of three or more children, three months of the leave are paid.
- Parents with a disabled child do not get additional Parental leave, but are eligible for leave for the care of dependants (see 1iie below).

---

<sup>4</sup> Public sector workers are also eligible for the Parental leave entitlement that applies to private sector employees (see above), since this leave is based on legislation that applies to both private and public sectors (Law 4075/12 that incorporates the EU Directive 2010/18 on Parental Leave). Unlike the unpaid Parental leave that covers exclusively public sector employees, this leave safeguards the employees' rights (i.e. it is considered as working time that secures social security rights and does not affect any other employee rights such as leave rights, professional advancement, pensions etc.) (The Citizen's Ombudsman, Annual Report 2014). The five year leave provision included in this section was introduced in 2011, as a minor provision in a multi-purpose Law; previously the period was two years. It is a provision that gives the opportunity to civil servants to use unpaid leave for 'serious personal reasons'. When the European Directive on Parental Leave was first introduced in Greece, an addition was made that allowed civil servants to use this leave as Parental leave.

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

- None.

#### **d. Childcare leave (άδεια ανατροφής or μειωμένο ωράριο εργασίας)**

A parent can take nine months of childcare leave with full payment as an alternative option to a scheme which allows parents to work reduced hours (see section 1iie below – ‘flexible working’). The leave is paid by the employer and 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 severely disabled child, the leave is extended by one month. In the case of multiple births, an extra six month is provided for each additional child.

#### **e. Other employment-related measures**

##### *Adoption leave and pay*

- Adoptive mothers are granted a three- month paid leave during the first six months after the adoption if the child is less than six years of age. One of the three months can be taken before adoption.

##### *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 child; up to five working days of paid leave per year if the employee has three or more children; up to six working days of paid leave per year if the employee is a single parent
- Leave for children’s sickness: Parents are entitled to one month of non-paid leave in case of hospitalization of their child due to illness or an accident that requires his/her presence
- Leave for visiting children’s school: up to four working days of paid leave for one child, 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 per year of paid leave for employees whose children or spouses need regular transfusion or periodic therapy or whose children suffer from severe mental handicap or Down’s syndrome. The leave does not constitute a personal entitlement and can be taken by either parent or shared by both.
- Leave for employees with children or spouses with disability: one hour per day, paid.

##### *Flexible working*

- Parents are entitled to work two hours less per day if he/she has children of less than two years old and one hour less per day if he/she has children between two and four years old, with full earnings replacement. As mentioned above (1iid) there is an alternative option for this leave which is nine consecutive months off work after Maternity leave.
- Flexible working does not constitute a personal entitlement and can be used by either or both parents within the total entitlement period with a common declaration addressed to their respective employers. However, the leave cannot be taken simultaneously by both parents.

- For a parent who is unmarried, widowed, divorced or severely disabled flexible working is extended by six months. In the case of the birth of a fourth child, flexible working is further extended by two years. In case of multiple births, flexible working is extended by six months for each child after the one.
- Adoptive parents of children up to the age of four are entitled to flexible working or alternatively childcare leave (see 1iid).
- An employee supporting a child or a husband/wife with a serious disability can work one hour less per day, with full payment.
- All paid leave is funded through general taxation.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Greece is 72 months in the public sector and 16 months in the private sector; but leave paid at a high rate runs only for 12 months and six months respectively. There is an entitlement to ECEC at five years of age, and attendance is compulsory for the year before the beginning of elementary school (i.e. from around six years). So there is no gap between the end of post-natal leave and an entitlement to ECEC for public sector workers, but a gap of more than three years for workers in the private sector; there is a substantial gap, of four years or more, for all workers between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. However, over the next three years, the gap will be reduced to a little more than two years as compulsory ECEC attendance is extended from one to two years. Levels of attendance at formal services for children under and over three years are well below the average for the countries included in this review and for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

## **3. Changes in policy since April 2017 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

The most significant development since April 2017 has been the extension of Maternity leave to surrogate mothers and mothers acquiring children through surrogate motherhood (Law 4488/2017, article 44). Under the same law, the above categories of mothers but also mothers in the process of adopting children are protected from dismissal, as other mothers already are (article 46). The same law also extended leave for health reasons to certain categories of children with disability (article 45).

Compulsory ECEC attendance for pre-school children has been extended from one to two years (Law 4521/2018, article 33); this will start to be implemented from the next school year and will be completed in three years.

In his Annual Report of 2017, the Greek Ombudsman notes that due to stereotypes and perceptions, fathers are not treated equally as regards leave requests. While as in previous years, he observes abuse of labour rights as regards pregnant women or women returning from Maternity leave in the private sector (p.204-5).

Within the context of the implementation of its National Action Plan (2016-2020) and in view of the continuing violation of rights related to maternity at the workplace, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality announced in March 2018 their intention to collaborate with the Ministry of Labour, the Labour Inspectors' Authority and the Greek Ombudsman for stricter monitoring of the implementation of the law.



## 4. Take-up of leave

There is no information on take-up of the various types of leave. Statistics provided by the Labour Inspectors' Authority record employees on leave by sex; but there is no information about how many employees are eligible but do not make use of their entitlement. It seems, however, that it is mothers who overwhelmingly use leave to which both parents are eligible. For example, in 2013 (there are no available data for 2014, 2015, 2016 or 2017 probably due to operational difficulties of the Labour Inspectors' Authority), out of the total number of employed women, 2.2 per cent of women but only 0.08 per cent of men made use of the paid childcare leave, while only 0.6 per cent of women and a negligible percentage of men made use of the non-paid Parental leave (Labour Inspectors' Authority, 2013 Annual Report). To become a meaningful indicator, the percentage should refer to the share of eligible mothers.

This lack of statistics is noted by the Committee of Experts on the Application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations, which asks the Greek government to provide information on the practical application of the provisions concerning leave entitlements for workers with family responsibilities under Act No. 3528/2007, Act No. 3986/2011 and Act No. 4075/2012, including statistical information on the extent to which men and women workers, respectively, make use of family-related leave entitlements both in the private and public sectors (Report of the Committee on the Application of International Labour Standards 2017 (I), p.401).

## 5. Research and publications on leave and other employment-related policies since April 2017

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

Under a call of proposals for a Programme of Academic Research within the framework of the Funding Mechanism of EEA 2009-2014, five research proposals were approved in the area of Gender Equality and Work-Life Balance. Out of the five, three were focused on work-life balance, but none was exclusively focused on leave though including some questions and sections on this subject. Some of the research publications were cited in last year's country note. Below some more of these publications are included. The first three, though cited as 2016 editions, only recently came out.

### b. Selected publications since April 2017

Thanopoulou, M. and Tsiganou, I. (eds.) (2016). *Gender in Science without numbers. From academia to work life. Main results of case studies*. Athens: National Center for Social Research. Available at: [https://worlbal.eu/files/publications/Gender\\_Science\\_Numbers.pdf](https://worlbal.eu/files/publications/Gender_Science_Numbers.pdf)  
The volume includes short reviews of the main results of eleven categories of women professionals and scientists. The qualitative research showed that the relationships between work and family life has been significantly influenced by the new conditions imposed by the recent economic crisis. Seven years after the advent of the crisis, the Greek society has undergone a variety of changes which are reflected in income, employment, state care services, benefits and allowances affecting those working in both, the public and private

sector. This publication is a summary in English of the two publications in Greek listed below.

Thanopoulou, M. and Tsiganou, I. (eds.) (2016). *Women between work and family within crisis, Case studies*. Athens: National Center for Social Research (in Greek)

Thanopoulou, M. and Tsiganou, I. (eds.) (2016). *Women in legal professions in the era of crisis: Between work and family*. Athens: National Center for Social Research (in Greek)

Alipranti-Maratou, L, Katsis A. and Papadimitriou P. (2017). *Work-Life (Im)balance, A quantitative research in Greece during the crisis*. Athens: KMOP. Available at: [https://zenodo.org/record/1118219#.Wp\\_oZWbhN-U](https://zenodo.org/record/1118219#.Wp_oZWbhN-U)

Reconciliation of family and professional life is a matter of paramount importance to personal development, creation of growth conditions in economy, increase in employability, reduction in unemployment, promotion of gender equality in private life and, more generally, to addressing the current demographic challenges. The objective of this study is to explore ways of effective reconciliation of work and family responsibilities in Greece during the crisis. The study is based on the findings of quantitative research conducted in a sample of 1,000 working women in different parts of Greece (urban areas, suburban areas, rural areas). In the framework of the study, reconciliation conditions of working women are examined in the light of different economic, social, demographic and personal characteristics. At the same time, the difficulties working women encounter so as to achieve better work-life balance as well as the role of family environment are presented. Furthermore, on the basis of international bibliography and good practices implemented in other countries, changes are proposed not only in benefits and services but also within the existing institutional framework of our country.

### **c. Ongoing research**

None reported.