

Norway¹

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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 terminology: there is no single agreed name for Maternity or Parental leave in Norway. The Work Environment Act 2005 (the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour), which grants leave but not money, uses the name *svangerskapspermisjon* (pregnancy leave) for the leave before birth, *fødselspermisjon* (birth leave) for the six weeks after and *foreldrepermisjon* (Parental leave) for the remaining leave period. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, which grants the money for leave, refers to *foreldrepengeperioden* ('parental money' period).

NB. There is no separate Maternity leave². The information below is for that part of Parental leave reserved for women before and after birth; it is treated separately here, but is in effect part of the longer *foreldrepengeperioden* (parental money period)

a. Maternity leave (*svangerskapspermisjon* and *fødselspermisjon* – see note on terminology) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion)

Length of leave

- Thirteen (13) weeks: three weeks before the birth and ten weeks following birth. It is obligatory to take six weeks leave after birth for health reasons.

¹ Please cite as: Brandth, B., Kvande, E. (2018) 'Norway 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/

² Leave of up to 12 weeks is available for pregnant women, who must quit work because of chemical, biological or physical hazards, and if the employer is unable to offer alternative work. It is paid at the same rate as sickness benefit.

Payment and funding

- One hundred (100) per cent of earnings up to a ceiling of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment (i.e. NOK92,576 [€9,819.09]³ per month), funded from general taxation.
- Parents who for a temporary period are not employed in order to care for children below school age, may receive some pension credits. Parental leaves are not affected by any reduction in pension credits as leaves are wage compensated.

Flexibility in use

- None. If the baby is born before the estimated delivery date (e.g. so that the mother uses less than her three weeks pre-birth leave), the remaining time cannot be transferred to after the birth and is therefore lost.

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

- All women employed for six of the last ten months prior to delivery are eligible for leave and also those who have earned at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year. Non-employed women receive a one-off payment of NOK61,120 [€6,482.70] per child. This payment is also given to non-employed women when the child is adopted.

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

- If the mother or child is ill and hospitalised after delivery, leave payment can be postponed.
- For multiple births or adoptions, the Parental leave period is prolonged by 5/7 weeks for each extra child. It means that parents to twins get 54/64 weeks and to triplets 59/69 weeks.

b. Paternity leave (commonly known as *pappapermisjon*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Two weeks after birth – ‘daddy days’ (+ten weeks = father’s quota, see section 1c).

Payment

- ‘Daddy days’ are unpaid by government; payment depends on individual or collective agreements and most employed fathers are covered by such agreements.

Flexibility in use

³ Conversion of currency undertaken on 13 June 2018, using: <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter>

- The Paternity leave is flexible in a number of ways. First, it can be used by someone else who will assist the mother (i.e. grandparents) if the parents do not live together. Second, the law does not inform as to when the leave must be taken other than “in connection with the birth”. This is normally interpreted as two weeks before or two weeks after. There is, however, an opportunity to move the leave if the situation requires it. Third, the leave may be split up. The father may for instance use a day or two to be present at birth, go back to work, and then take the rest when mother and child comes home. Fourth, it can be used by foster- or adoptive parents when taking over the care.

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

- All employed fathers have the right to leave, but payment is negotiated and paid by the employer.

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 father.

- Leave can be transferred to someone else if the father does not live with the mother, since the purpose of the leave is to assist the mother. (See flexibility above)

c. Parental leave (*Foreldrepengeperioden*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Equality)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- Forty-six (46) or 56 weeks depending on payment level (see ‘payment and funding’ below) + a further three weeks before birth, i.e. a total of 49/59 weeks. Of the post-natal period, ten weeks are for mothers (*mødrekvoten* or ‘mothers’ quota’) and ten weeks are for fathers (*fedrekvoten* or ‘fathers’ quota’). The remaining 26 or 36 weeks is a family entitlement and may be taken by either mother or father. See ‘flexibility’ below for options available to parents.

Payment and funding

- Parental money may either be taken for 49 weeks at 100 per cent of earnings or for 59 weeks at 80 per cent of earnings, up to a ceiling of six times the basic national insurance benefit payment (i.e. NOK92,576 [€9,819.09] per month (regulated on 1 May each year). When employees are included in collective agreements the employers pay the difference between wages and the cap.
- As of 1 January 2018, non-employed women receive a flat-rate payment of NOK63,140 [€6,696.95] per child.
- Funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- For the family entitlement part of leave, it is possible to choose a longer period of leave (36 weeks) paid at 80 per cent of earnings, or a shorter (26 weeks) paid at 100 per cent.

- After the first six weeks, it is possible to postpone parts of the parental money period, as long as it is taken during the first three years after birth and the parent receiving the money is employed full time during the postponement period. Hospitalisation and vacation may also qualify for postponement.
- After the first six weeks, it is also possible for one or both parents to combine all or part of the parental money period with part-time work. If parents take less than the full benefit payment, this will prolong the period of parental money. Both parents may choose to combine parental money with part-time work (for instance, each working half-time) at the same time. A written agreement from the employer is required in both cases. There is also a requirement that non-eligible mothers have returned to employment or study, for the father to take the family entitlement part of leave (see below).
- Father's quota: this period of leave (ten weeks) is not transferable to the mother, except in certain circumstances: if the father is ill or otherwise unable to care for the child or if the mother and father do not live together.
- Father's quota may not be taken in the first six weeks of the parental money period, except for multiple births or adoption. Otherwise, fathers are free to choose at what time during the three-year period to use it. They can also choose whether to take the quota as part-time leave, also whether to split it or use it in one block. This flexible use requires agreement with the employer.
- The family entitlement part may also be taken as one block of time, as part-time or split into shorter blocks of time.
- Both parents may take leave at the same time, except during the period of obligatory leave for the mother (i.e. three weeks before birth and six weeks after). During the period of the father's quota, there is no requirement for what mothers can do (i.e. both parents may be on leave together). Taking leave at the same time shortens the period of paid leave.

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

- The main eligibility rules are the same for fathers and mothers. They must be employed for six of the last ten months prior to birth and earn at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year.
- The eligibility rules for the family entitlement and father's quota are somewhat different. The father can use the 26/36 weeks of paid leave (the family entitlement) even if the mother is not eligible; but the mother is required to take up work or study (at least 75 per cent of full-time hours). For the father's quota, the mother must also have been eligible, but there is no requirement that eligible mothers (employed for six of the last ten months prior to birth) go back to work. According to data from 2011⁴, 87 per cent of fathers were eligible. Most of the remainder were not eligible because the mother was not entitled to leave (being, for example, a student or unemployed), or themselves being unemployed.
- Self-employed workers are eligible for the same leave benefits as employees.

⁴ Kitterød, R.H., Halrynjo, S. and Østbakken, K. M. (2017) *Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?* [Fathers who do not take paternity allowance - how many, who and why]. Report 2017:2, Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

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

- Family entitlement: when more than one child is born, the parental money period is increased by seven weeks for each child with 80 per cent pay, or five weeks with 100 per cent pay. If the child dies during the Parental leave period, parents will receive payment for six weeks of the period that is left.
- Single mothers who are eligible for Parental leave will automatically receive the ten weeks father's quota. However, and if the parents agree, they may apply for the non-residential father to use the father's quota.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

- Each parent has the right to one year of unpaid leave after the parental money period.
- Parents with a child between one and two years old are entitled to receive a cash benefit ('cash-for-care' scheme) on condition they do not use publicly funded ECEC service. The full benefit is NOK6,000 [€636,39] per month. Children who use ECEC on a part-time basis receive a reduced benefit (e.g. if parents do not use a place, they receive 100 per cent of the benefit; if they use a place for up to 20 hours a week they receive 50 per cent of the full benefit). The main criterion for eligibility, therefore, is not parental employment status, but parents not using a particular service.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- The same regulations apply as for parents having their own children, except for the nine weeks of leave reserved for mothers before and after birth. The whole period, with the exception of the father's quota, may be taken by either parent. Parents adopting children from abroad who are not eligible for Parental leave receive a cash benefit of NOK63,140 [€15,601.29]

Time off for the care of dependants

- Each parent of one or two children under 12 years has a right to: ten working days leave per year when children are sick (or the childminder or grandparent is ill in the case that children are not in kindergarten), or 15 if they have more than two children. Single parents have the right to 20/30 days a year. For severely or chronically sick children, there are extended rights to leave until the child is 18 years old. Leave is paid by the employer at the same rate as sickness benefit, i.e. at 100 per cent of earnings.

Flexible working

- Parents have a right to part-time work to care for children, until children are ten years old.

Specific provision for (breast-)feeding

- The Work Environment Act grants all breastfeeding mothers the right to breastfeeding breaks of up to one hour per day for children under one year old. From 1 January 2014 this leave is paid by the employer.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Norway is just over three years. About two years of this is unpaid (except for recipients of 'cash-for care', see section 1d, but they may not use publicly-funded ECEC services or only part time). Leave paid at a high earnings-related rate runs for 13 months (59 weeks at 80 per cent wage). There is an entitlement to ECEC from one year of age, supposed to be available on a full-time basis at kindergartens. So there is no gap between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement in theory. However, a child must be born before the 1 September to be guaranteed a place in the autumn (start of the school year). Levels of attendance at formal services for children under and over three years are above 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 new conservative government which was elected in September 2017, has decided to increase the mothers' and fathers' quotas to 15 weeks. The rest of the Parental leave period will be 16/26 weeks family entitlement, which can be shared between the parents. The plan is to introduce these new regulations on 1 July 2018. Moreover, it is proposed to give four months extra leave for born/adopted twins. Parents who get three or more children in one birth/adoption will get a double leave length. The government has decided to give all children, who are one years old by November 2017, a right to a place in kindergarten. This is estimated to give 4,400 more children a place in kindergarten as of autumn 2017. The government has proposed some simplifications in the Parental leave rules – for the most part these are administrative simplifications meant to make it easier to understand the rules.

A white paper (NOU 2017:6) which discusses public support for families with small children includes a number of new policy suggestions. In order to encourage equality between parents, the White Paper suggests that the Parental leave should be divided equally between the parents, except for three weeks before birth and six weeks after birth reserved for the mother. The rest of the 40 weeks should be divided in two equal parts, twenty weeks for the mother and twenty weeks for the father. . These suggestions are now being discussed by the political parties. The Labour unions and the Employers' organisations support this suggestion. In addition, it is suggested to give both parents individual rights to parental leave and also to abolish the cash for care to be replaced by free kindergarten for all children between one and six years old.

4. Take-up of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nine out of ten mothers have the right to parental money; the remainder do not meet the eligibility conditions⁵. Mothers not eligible for parental money receive a one-off payment. This is a heterogeneous group of mothers, but with an overrepresentation of immigrant mothers⁶.

b. Paternity leave

The share of fathers who take time off work around the birth of the child is approximately the same as for the father's quota, 89 per cent. This figure includes fathers taking time off work in various ways, including Paternity leave but also annual leave and other options. These survey data are not recent. There is no official, aggregated registration of the use of Paternity leave.

c. Parental leave

In the years prior to the introduction of the father's quota, less than four per cent of fathers took some Parental leave. Only a few years later, the take-up rate was over 70 per cent (representative sample; own research from 1997), and data from public records later showed that about 90 per cent of eligible fathers take leave of some length⁴. More recent comparable figures are hard to obtain as fathers now take their leave over several statistical periods and NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) no longer calculates the take-up rate. Comparable figures are also hard to obtain because of changes in the way statistics are presented and because the leave length changes all the time.

Figures based on public records in 2011 show that 18 per cent of the Parental leave days were taken by fathers. With every expansion of the father's quota, fathers have increased their uptake the following year. During 2012, 21 per cent of the fathers took exactly 12 weeks (60 working days), compared with only 0.6 per cent in 2011. The 'father's quota' increased from ten to 12 weeks between these two dates. In 2013 fathers took 46 days parental leave on average, and in 2014, 49 days. With the reduction of the quota's length, to ten weeks/50 days (effective from 1 July 2014), fathers' average uptake has also decreased to 47 days. Fathers take the number of father's quota days that corresponds to the number weeks granted by the rules. As the father's quota was lengthened, flexible use increased. In 2014, 25 per cent of eligible fathers took their father's quota part time, combining leave and work. This figure was slightly reduced in 2015 and 2016. Also as the quota has lengthened, parents rarely stay home together for the whole period, but it is quite common to stay home together part of the time.

The shareable Parental leave is for the most part taken by mothers. Figures from register data show that 14 per cent of eligible fathers took less than the father's quota and only ten per cent took more in 2011⁷. As the quota became longer,

⁵ Grambo, A.C. and Myklebø, S. (2009) *Moderne familier – tradisjonelle valg. En studie av mors og fars uttak av foreldrepermisjoner*. [Modern families - traditional choices. A study of mother's and father's parental leave episodes], Oslo: Nav.

⁶ NOU 2017:6 Offentlig støtte til barnefamiliene.

⁷ See Kitterød, R.H., Halrynjo, S. and Østbakken, K. M. (2017) 'Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?' [Fathers who do not take paternity allowance - how many, who and why]. Report 2017:2, Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

fewer fathers took the sharable leave. Father's use of this leave is in part dependent on the mother and her willingness to share: mothers who have invested in education and have strong ties to working life (e.g. work full-time and have higher-status work) are thus most likely to share. This means that fathers are more likely to take some Parental leave, when mothers have: a high level of education, high income and work status, and full-time employment.

However, some characteristics of the father are also associated with use of leave. Although social class differences are small, the father's level of education has some influence, particularly on the length of the leave. The eligible fathers least likely to use the quota are fathers with long working hours, in managerial positions or with a partner who works part time. Moreover, fathers' sharing of the Parental leave also depends on their relationship to work. Fathers must sometimes negotiate with their employers when they want to take more leave than the father's quota, and the view that Parental leave is really for mothers is to be found among some employers.

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

Research is constantly being undertaken. It is dispersed across many institutions in Norway, including a substantial part in the form of masters, doctoral or other small-scale studies.

b. Selected recent publications

Brandth, B., Halrynjo, S. and Kvande, E. (eds.) (2017) *Work-Family Dynamics: Competing logics of regulation, economy and morals*. London: Routledge.

This volume offers a new type of lens for understanding work-family reconciliation by studying how work-family dynamics are shaped, squeezed and developed between consistent or competing logics in different societies in Europe and the US. The three institutions of "state", "family" and "working life", and their under-explored primary logics of "regulation", "morality" and "economic competitiveness" are examined theoretically as well as empirically throughout the chapters, thus contributing to an understanding of the contemporary challenges within the field of work-family research that combines structure and culture. Particular attention is given to the ways in which the institutions are confronted with various moral norms of good parenthood or motherhood and ideals for family life. Likewise, the logic of policy regulation and gendered family moralities are challenged by the economic logic of working life, based on competition in favour of the most productive workers and organizations.

Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2017) 'Fathers integrating work and child care: Reconciling the logics', in: B. Brandth, S. Halrynjo and E. Kvande (eds.) *Work, Family Dynamics: Institutions and Competing Logics*. London: Routledge.

Kitterød, R.H., Halrynjo, S. and Østbakken, K. M. (2017) *Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?* [Fathers who do not take paternity allowance - how many, who and why]. ISS report 2017:2, Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

Kitterød, R.H. and Halrynjo, S. (2017) *Mindre spesialisering med fedrekvote? Foreldrepermisjonens potensial for å endre arbeidsdelingen blant foreldre* [Less specialization with paternity leave? A discussion of the potential for parental leave to change gendered work-family patterns] *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* Vol.58, No.3: 311-333.

Heggem, G.F. and Kvande, E. (2017) 'Nordic work/family regulations exported to a liberal context', in: B. Brandth, S. Halrynjo and E. Kvande (eds.) *Work, Family Dynamics: Institutions and Competing Logics*. London: Routledge.

Kvande, E. and Brandth, B. (2017) 'Constructing male employees as carers through the Norwegian Father's Quota', in: M. Oechsle and B. Liebig (eds.) *Fathers in Work Organizations: Inequalities and Capabilities, Rationalities and Politics*. Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Kvande, E., Brandth, B. and S. Halrynjo (2017) 'Integrating work and family: changing institutions and competing logics', in: B. Brandth, S. Halrynjo and E. Kvande (eds.) *Work, Family Dynamics: Institutions and Competing Logics*. London: Routledge.

Kvande, E. and B. Brandth (2017) 'Fathers on leave alone in Norway: changes and continuities', in: M. O'Brien and K. Wall (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality: fathers on leave alone*. London: Springer, pp. 29-44.

Schou, L. (2017) 'Fedrekvoten – uttak og holdninger' [The fathers' quota – use and attitude]. *Arbeid og velferd*, 3: 81-95.

Brandth, B. and Kvande, E. (2018) 'Masculinity and fathering alone during parental leave'. *Men and Masculinities*, Vol.21, No.1: 72-90.

c. Ongoing research

New theoretical perspectives on the Nordic model of work-family reconciliations. Berit Brandth, Elin Kvande and Sigtona Halrynjo, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The funded period of the project is over, and publications are forthcoming.

The objectives of this study has been to develop new theoretically informed understandings and perspectives on the Nordic model of work/family adaptations, to contribute to new empirical knowledge on work/family adaptations through examination of possibilities and dilemmas within three empirical research contexts and to situate the Norwegian model in an international context through international collaboration and a comparative book project. Contact: Elin Kvande at elin.kvande@svt.ntnu.no and Berit Brandth at berit.brandth@svt.ntnu.no.

Care deficit, transnational fathers and the Norwegian care regime (Brita Bungum and Elin Kvande), at the Department of Sociology and Political Science, NTNU.

This project takes as its starting point the normative ideas and institutional arrangements included in the Norwegian childcare regime as they are specified in two different care policies. These are: 1) The Parental leave system, with a

special quota for fathers, and 2) The cash for care system, which is meant to provide more time for parents to care for their children. While dual caring is becoming a dominant ideal and practice in Norway and the cash for care policy is used by a small percentage of Norwegian families, we observe an increase in the transfers to transnational families of the cash for care. This is a policy measure supporting fathers as earners but not as carers, and thus working counter to the original intention of the policies. Addressing this paradox, the research questions in this project are: 1) What tensions in institutional logics are conveyed when national policies are introduced in transnational families? 2) How do different policies influence fathers' care practices in transnational families?