

Cyprus¹

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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

Length of leave (prior to and following childbirth)

- 18 weeks, of which 11 are compulsory and allocated as follows: two prior to the week of the expected birth and the rest following childbirth.

Payment and funding

- Maternity benefit starts at 72 per cent of the mother's salary with the first child. The percentage increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent, with the second, third and fourth child respectively. Some private companies cover the remaining 28 per cent for the first child: in such cases, an employer can request the maternity benefit from the state on behalf of the employee, then add the balance, so that the employee receives a full salary from the employer.
- For public sector employees, the first 12 weeks of leave are fully compensated, while the following six weeks are paid at 72 per cent of the employee's salary.

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Flexibility in use

- Maternity leave can start two weeks before the expected week of birth or from the week of the actual birth.

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

- Full-time and part-time female employees, as well as self-employed women, are entitled to 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 mother

- In the case of the birth of multiple children, the period of 18 weeks is increased by four weeks for each additional child (e.g. 22 weeks for twins and 26 weeks for triplets).
- In the case of premature labour or in any other case where the infant is hospitalised right after birth for health reasons, the mother is entitled to additional Maternity leave as follows: for the first 21 days that the infant is in an incubator, the employee is entitled to one additional week of Maternity leave. If the infant remains hospitalised, the employee is entitled to an additional week of leave for every additional 50 per cent of a 21-day period (i.e. 10.5 days that the baby remains in hospital) up to a maximum of six weeks in total.
- In order to be granted leave over and above a period of 18 weeks, the employee must provide her employer with written certification from the hospital and from a doctor with the relevant speciality.

b. Paternity leave

Length of leave

- Two consecutive weeks.

Payment

- Paternity benefit starts at 72 per cent of the father's salary with the first child. The percentage increases to 80 per cent, 90 per cent or 100 per cent, with the second, third and fourth child respectively.

Flexibility in use

- Paternity leave may be used across any two consecutive weeks during the 16 weeks that the Maternity leave is in effect, following the birth or the adoption of the child.

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

- Paternity leave is granted to men whose wives have given birth; or have a co-habitation agreement and their female partner has given birth; or men in a heterosexual couple who have had a child through a surrogate mother; or have adopted a child under the age of 12.

c. Parental leave

Length of leave

- 18 weeks per parent per child. Leave is an individual entitlement, but part-transferable in certain circumstances (see 'Flexibility in use' below).
- Only up to five weeks of leave can be taken in any one calendar year (or seven weeks if there are three or more children).

Payment

- None. However, social insurance contribution continues to be paid into the employee's social insurance fund during the leave period.

Flexibility in use

- Parental leave can be taken at any time between the birth of a child and the child turning eight years of age. Parents with disabled children can take Parental leave until their child reaches the age of eighteen years.
- Parental leave can be taken for between one week (minimum) and five weeks (maximum) per calendar year for one or two children, and seven weeks for three or more children.
- When one parent has taken Parental leave of at least two weeks, they can transfer the other parent two weeks from the rest of their leave.

Eligibility

- All employed parents with non-disabled children up to the age of eight years or disabled children up to the age of eighteen years, who

have completed at least six months of continuous employment with the same employer, and provided that at least 26 weeks of employment have elapsed.

- Same sex couples cannot legally parent a child together in Cyprus. They cannot adopt a child together or be recognised as the parent of a child who was conceived by a female partner through medically assisted reproduction. They are also not eligible to apply for surrogacy.

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 premature birth or the mother having health issues, Parental leave can be taken before birth.
- In the case of widowed parents, the leave can be increased to 23 weeks.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- 16 weeks in case of adoption, if the child is under the age of 12 years.
- 14 weeks for both surrogate mothers and mothers who have a child through a surrogate mother.

Time off for the care of dependent

- Any employee is entitled to unpaid leave of up to seven days a year, on grounds of *force majeure* (i.e. for urgent cases such as a dependant being sick or in an accident). A dependent is defined as a child, husband, wife, parent, brother, sister, grandfather, or grandmother of the employee.
- Such leave may be granted as a single period of leave or split across separate periods of time.
- For married couples, each spouse is individually entitled to such leave.

Breastfeeding breaks

- Following Maternity leave, for the purposes of breastfeeding, a working mother has the right to arrive at work one hour later, leave work one hour earlier, or take a one-hour break during the workday for a period of six months.

Antenatal appointments and care

- Pregnant employees are permitted paid time off for antenatal examinations, provided that such examinations need be carried out during working hours. They should give advance notice to their employers and provide a relevant doctor's note.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave available in Cyprus is six months. The full period of Parental leave can only be taken in five-week blocs per year: in total, only 3.7 months of the leave is paid. There is an entitlement to ECEC from the age of 4 years and 8 months (i.e. in the year before children start primary school). Attendance during this year is obligatory. There is a gap of over four years between the end of leave and an ECEC entitlement, and even longer between the end of well paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. Levels of attendance at formal services for children both under and over the age of three years are slightly below the average for the countries included in this review, as well as for OECD countries. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on the cross-country comparisons page.

3. Changes in policy since May 2019 (including proposals currently under discussion)

None mentioned.

Policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic up to end June 2020

Childcare and schools

- All kindergartens, nurseries and schools, both public and private, remained closed during the lock-down. There was a gradual ease of lockdown measures and schools reopened in different phases for different ages.

Schools firstly opened for students in the final year and lastly for kindergarten and nursery children.

- On 10 March 2020 the government announced the temporarily closure of schools and kindergartens initially in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. In the days that followed the kindergartens, schools and universities in all areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus were closed too. On 24 March the Education Ministry announced that it had completed the design of a system to provide distant teaching and pedagogical support to all public schools.
- There was a gradual reopening of schools. On 11 May 2020, final year students returned to schools. On 21 May, schools reopened for primary school students, aged between six and twelve, and for gymnasium students, aged between 13 and 15.
- Students with disabilities, health problems and children accompanied by school aides in primary and lower secondary schools were not allowed to return to their schools. This decision was withdrawn after being criticized by parents, teachers, the Commissioner for Children's Rights as well as political parties. On 29 May the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth announced that 323 children of special education without any Covid-19 symptoms could return to school.
- On 9 June 2020, private preschool premises, kindergartens, nurseries, children's clubs, all-day and summer schools, as well as schools for special education and training (special schools) reopened.

Parental leave

- Parents have access to regular and pre-existing leave policies during the pandemic. There were no initiatives to actively support or modify the regular leave options during the lock down or for future leave takers.

Other measures for parents and other carers

- **Special Leave for Child Care** was provided by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance; it was introduced and extended in three different announcements that covered the periods from 16 March 2020 to 12 April 2020, 13 April 2020 to 12 May 2020, 13 May 2020 to 12 June 2020. Beneficiaries were working parents responsible for the care of children up to 15 years old and/or children with disabilities, regardless of age, whom, due to the nature of their work, cannot work either remotely or at home or with flexible working hours and where there is no entry allowed to the place of work, such as domestic workers. The period for Special Leave for Child Care cannot exceed a four week period in total, for both parents.
- Eligible applicants are employees who are insured with the Social Insurance Services in January 2020 and have a gross monthly salary of up to €2500.

- If one parent receives the Special Leave for Child Care Permit, the other cannot receive it for the same period.
- If one parent is working and the other is not (either because he/she receives an unemployment allowance or a special unemployment allowance or sickness allowance or sickness allowance, either because he/ she is unemployed or for any other similar reasons), the working parent is not entitled to Special Leave at that time, unless the non-working parent has himself/ herself been infected with COVID 19 or is hospitalized or is a person with a disability or he/she is under mandatory quarantine.
- Employer consent is needed to qualify for a Special Child Care Allowance.
- For parents of persons with disabilities, the Special Leave for Child Care is granted if no care allowance is granted for them, by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Security.
- The Child Care Special Leave Allowance is not granted for a period for which the applicant receives an unemployment allowance, a special unemployment allowance, sickness benefit, a special sickness allowance.
- The Child Care Special Leave allowance is calculated provided that all the terms and conditions as described above are met:
 - Based on January 2020 salary or, in case there is no data on the last salary of 2020, based on last salary for which there is data within the last 9 months in the register of Social Insurance Services:
 - For the first €1,000 of the monthly salary, an allowance of 60 per cent is calculated for that part of the salary. For the part of the salary from €1,000 to €2,000 an allowance of 40 per cent is calculated. The maximum amount of allowance for a period of one month cannot exceed the amount of €1,000.
 - For single parent families the above rates increase to 70 per cent and 50 per cent respectively and the maximum allowance for a one-month period cannot exceed the amount of €1,200.
 - Cases of single parent families where the last monthly salary exceeds €2,500 will be examined on the basis of the particular features of each case.
 - The allowance will be calculated in proportion to the days for which the applicant becomes a beneficiary.
 - For the period for which the childcare allowance is to be paid, the employer is exempt from the obligation to pay the salary to his employees who receive the allowance.
 - The period of Special Leave for Child Care will be considered as a period of equivalent insurance for the purposes of contributions to the Social Security Fund and the beneficiary's insurance account will be credited accordingly.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nearly all mothers take Maternity leave.

b. Paternity leave

There is no information available so far. The leave was only introduced in 2017.

c. Parental leave

There is no information available.