

# Latvia<sup>1</sup>

**Natālija Pīlpa** (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia)

April 2021

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 (*grūtniecības un dzemdību atvaļinājums*) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)

*Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- 56 days before and 56 days after the birth of a child. No part of the leave is obligatory.

*Payment and funding*

- For employed women: 80 per cent of the previous earnings calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending two months before the month in which the leave begins.
- For self-employed women: 80 per cent of the gross insurance contributions made during the period of the 12 calendar months ending one quarter before the quarter in which the leave begins. The benefit is paid in two parts: the first part is calculated for the 56 days (or 70 days) before the due date, and the second part is calculated for the 56 days (or 70 days) after the actual birth date.
- The average amount of the maternity benefit (in total) in 2020 was €2,5055.68 for the first part of the leave and €1,810.35 for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Please cite as: Pīlpa, N. (2021) 'Latvia country note', in Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G. and Moss, P. (eds.) *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2021*. Available at: <https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/>

second part of the leave. The number of recipients during the year was 15,914 (around 1,326 per month).

- Funded from social insurance.
- Maternity benefit is not taxable.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- None, except for when the leave can be started (not earlier than 56 days before birth). The leave days that were not used before the birth, cannot be used after the birth, i.e. the post-natal leave period cannot exceed 56 days.

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

- All women who are (self-)employed and have paid social insurance contributions for at least 12 months during the last 24 months, before the month in which the leave begins.
- All women who have paid social insurance contributions in Latvia for at least three months in the period of the last six months before the first day of Maternity leave or for at least six months in the last 24 months.
- All women who are spouses of a self-employed man and who have joined the social insurance system voluntarily.
- In a case where employment has ended due to the company's liquidation, the benefit is provided if the leave has started no later than 210 days after the end of employment.
- All women who have lost the status of (self-)employed no later than 60 days before the first day of Maternity leave. For the period after the childbirth – father of a child or any other person who takes care of a new-born at home and fulfils the social insurance criteria is entitled to paid Maternity leave of 56 or 70 days if:
  - the mother is unable to take care of the child until the 42<sup>nd</sup> post-natal day due to sickness;
  - the mother has refused to take care of the child;
  - the mother has died during childbirth or before the 42<sup>nd</sup> post-natal day;
  - the child is a foundling (the child has been abandoned, and the mother is unknown).
- The right to the maternity benefit ends six months from the first day of the first part of the leave (if the eligible person fails to apply until the end of that period, the right cannot be exercised).

#### *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 a person other than the mother*

- If the mother has required medical supervision due to the

pregnancy (no later than at the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the pregnancy) – 14 extra days of leave before the birth of a child are provided.

- In the case of multiple births or complications during pregnancy, childbirth, or the postpartum period, 14 extra days of leave after the birth are provided.
- In the case of premature birth, the maternity benefit is paid in the same amount as it would be if the birth would take place at the due date.
- If a person is entitled to the unemployment allowance and Maternity benefit for the same time period, the unemployment allowance is suspended for that particular period, that is, only Maternity benefit is paid.

#### **b. Paternity leave (paternitātes atvaļinājums) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)**

##### *Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- 10 calendar days after childbirth.
- The leave has to be requested no later than two months after childbirth; the benefit has to be requested no later than six months after the first day of the leave.

##### *Payment and funding*

- For employed men: 80 per cent of previous earnings, calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending two months before the month in which the leave begins.
- For self-employed men: 80 per cent of the gross insurance contributions made during the period of 12 calendar months, ending one quarter before the quarter in which the leave begins.
- The average amount of the paternity benefit in 2020 was €378.30, and the number of recipients during the year was 9,938 (around 828 per month).
- Funded from social insurance budget.

##### *Flexibility in use*

- None, except for when the leave can be started.
- The leave can be divided into parts as agreed with the employer.

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

- The father of a child if the Paternity leave is granted no later than the first two months after the birth.

- The same insurance period eligibility criteria needed as for Maternity leave.
- One of the adoptive parents until the child reaches eighteen years of age.
- The right to the paternity benefit ends six months from the first day of the Paternity leave.
- No specific regulation regarding same-sex couples (i.e., the right to the leave and thus the benefit is attached to any person who falls under the eligibility criteria mentioned above). However, based on the Constitutional Court of Latvia decision, as of 1 June 2022, the same sex-couples will be eligible for paid Paternity 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 a person other than the father*

- None.

### **c. Parental leave (bērna kopšanas atvaļinājums) (responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare)**

*Length of leave (before and after birth)*

- 18 months per parent.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, but only one parent may receive payment (for a maximum period of 18 months).

*Payment and funding*

- There are three separate benefits that are paid after the birth of a child: parental benefit, childbirth benefit, and child care allowance.

*Parental benefit*

- Only parents who are participants of the social insurance system are eligible.
- Parents can choose between two options: 1) if a parent chooses to receive the benefit until a child reaches one year of age, the parental benefit is 60 per cent of the previous earnings, calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending two months before the month in which the leave begins; 2) if a parent chooses to receive the benefit until a child reaches 18 months of age, the parental benefit is 43.75 per cent of the previous earnings, calculated based on the average salary on which insurance contributions

have been paid for a period of 12 calendar months, ending two months before the month in which the leave begins.

- Funded in the same way as for Maternity and Paternity leave.
- The average amount of the Parental benefit in 2019 was €655.39 per month for parents who chose to receive the benefit until a child reaches one year of age (number of recipients: around 2,292 per month, 57.4 per cent of which women) and €446.46 for parents who chose to receive the benefit until a child reaches 18 months of age (number of recipients: around 19,030 per month, 85.6 per cent of which women).
- The amount of parental benefit is reduced to 30 per cent of the benefit granted, if the beneficiary discontinues Parental leave in order to resume working.

#### *Childbirth benefit*

- Paid to one of the parents or the legal guardian of a child, if the child has been taken under guardianship until they reach one year of age.
- The benefit is a lump sum allowance of €421.17 for each child, and it is available to all parents (also the parents not paying social insurance).
- The right to the childbirth benefit starts on day eight of child's life or the day the guardianship has been granted, and ends six months later.

#### *Child care allowance*

- Paid to one of the parents or the legal guardian of a child if the child has been taken under guardianship, or one of the adoptive parents, or a foster parent.
- The benefit is €171 per month for each child until a child reaches 18 months of age and then €42.69 per month for each child until a child reaches 24 months of age.
- The application for the child care allowance should be submitted within six months from the first day of the child's life or the day the guardianship has been granted.
- Parents who are not participants of the social contribution system and have not received maternity, parental, or child care allowance are entitled to receive the child care benefit of €171 per month for each child until a child reaches 18 months of age, and then €42.69 per month for each child until a child reaches 24 months of age.
- Additionally, one of the parents, guardians, or adoptive parents are entitled to receive the family state benefit:
  - The amount of the family state benefit is €11.38 per month for the first child; €22.76 per month for the second child;

€34.14 per month for the third child; and €50.07 per month for the fourth and any other children. The benefit is paid after the child reaches one year of age until they turn 15 years of age (or 20 years of age if a child continues their studies and has not been married). The benefit is paid directly to the child after they reach 18 years of age, if prior to that they have been under guardianship.

- Families with two or more children are entitled to additional benefit: €10 per month for families with two children; €66 per month for families with three children; €116 per month for families with four children; €166 per month for families with five children; €216 per month for families with six children, and so on. When calculating the number of children in the family, the following children are not counted: children for whom the family state benefit is received by the other parent; children older than 20 years of age; children younger than 20 years of age but have not continued their studies after they turned 15 years of age; children younger than one year of age.
- Families with disabled children or children diagnosed with coeliac disease are entitled to additional benefit: €106.72 per month for each child with a disability or coeliac disease.
- Additionally, one of the parents, a guardian, or one of the adoptive parents are entitled to receive the allowance for the care of a disabled child: €313.43 per month for each child with a disability, until the child reaches 18 years of age and €79.68 once every six months if the State Medical Commission for the Assessment of Health Condition and Working Ability has issued a conclusion on the necessity for a specially fitted vehicle (car) until the child reaches 18 years of age.

#### *Flexibility in use*

- Both parents are entitled to 18 months of leave until a child reaches eight years of age. It can be taken in several blocks.
- The leave can be used simultaneously by both parents, but only one parent can receive the benefit. The recipient is allowed to transfer the right to benefit to the other parent, if needed. Also, it is allowed to work and receive the benefit, however, in those cases, the amount of the benefit is reduced (see above).
- Only one of the parents can receive the parental benefit for the period of 12 or 18 months. Parents are entitled to transfer the benefit right to one another.

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

- Only parents who are participants of the social insurance system

(see Maternity leave).

- One of the parents (adoptive or biological) of the child;
- Child's foster family member;
- Child's guardian or any other person who takes care of a child according to the decision of an orphans' court.
- Women who are not (self-)employed at the date when the benefit is requested but were (self-)employed no later than 60 days before the first day of the Maternity leave, or 210 days before the first day of the Maternity leave in case of company's liquidation, or have lost the (self-)employment status during the 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 a person other than mother*

- A guardian, foster parent or adoptive parent has the right to request a change in the length of parental benefit if the biological parent has had already used the right to parental benefit (only a remaining leave can be used).
- If the next child is born before the previous has reached three years of age, the parental benefit cannot be smaller than the benefit a parent received for the previous child.

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

No statutory entitlement.

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

*Adoption leave and pay*

- Adoptive parents are entitled to Paternity and Parental leave. Payment and funding are provided on the same grounds as for biological parents.

*Time off for the care of dependants*

- Parents who have joined the social insurance system (employed, self-employed, or parents whose spouse is self-employed) are entitled to sick leave and benefit for a child up to 14 years of age: 14 days per sickness episode if a child has been taken care of at home, or up to 21 days if a child has been admitted to hospital;
- Parents whose child have been diagnosed with a severe illness and for whom the consilium has issued a respective decision; or parents who receive the allowance for the care of a disabled child if long-term hospital treatment is needed are entitled to sickness benefit for a period up to 26 weeks in case of a continuous sickness

or for no longer than three years in five years period in case of various sickness episodes.

- Grandparents, foster parents, guardian, or any other person who takes care of a child according to the decision of an orphans' court are also entitled to sickness benefit;
- The sickness benefit is calculated in the same way as the maternity and paternity benefits, and is taxable.

### *Flexible working*

- Pregnant women, women in the post-natal period up to one year after the birth, parents who have a child up to 14 years of age (or up to 18 years of age if a child has a disability), and breast-feeding women are entitled to part-time work with the right to return to a full-time work pattern when they need to do so.
- Pregnant women are entitled to leave the workplace for a doctor's appointment.
- Parents who have a child up to 18 years of age are entitled to temporary absence in the case of the sickness of a child or an accident, as well as for a doctor's appointment.
- Parents who have a child up to three years of age (or 18 years of age if a child has a disability) are entitled to annual leave during the summer months as a priority group.
- Parents who have one or two children up to 14 years of age are entitled to additional annual leave – one working day (paid).
- Parents who have three or more children up to 16 years of age (or up to 18 years of age if a child has a disability) are entitled to additional annual leave – three working days (paid).

### *Specific provision for (breast-)feeding*

- Parents (both mothers and fathers) with a child up to 18 months of age are entitled to a paid additional break for feeding their child – at least 30 minutes every three hours (or 60 minutes every three hours, if a parent has more than one child up to 18 months of age). Upon request, parents are entitled to combine these breaks, thus prolonging a lunch break or shortening their working hours.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is 38 months, but only just over half of this is paid and only 1.9 months is well paid. According to the Law on Education, Article 17, municipalities are responsible for ensuring that all children from 18 months of age registered in their area receive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in an institution that is closest to the child's home; a child can also attend an ECEC institution



in another municipality and receive the same financial support as those children who attend an institution in the municipality of their place of residence. In principle, therefore, there is no gap between the end of leave and an entitlement to ECEC and a gap of around 16 months between the end of well-paid leave and an ECEC entitlement. However, in practice, there are no municipalities that can offer a place in a municipal ECEC institution for all children: for instance, in October 2020, there were around 10,031 children from the ages of one and a half to six years who did not receive a place in a municipal ECEC institution. The most difficult situation is in Riga municipality, with 2,097 children waiting for a place in a municipal ECEC (for comparison – the second biggest city, Daugavpils, has registered only 33 children who are waiting for a place in a municipal ECEC).

Levels of attendance at formal ECEC services for children under the age of three are below the average both for the countries included in this review and OECD countries; but above the average for children over the age of three years. For actual attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on the [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

Since the uptake of Parental leave is mostly until a child reaches 18 months of age, municipalities provide financial support for fees in private ECEC institutions if no place is available in a municipal service when a child reaches 18 months of age. The amount of allowance is decided by calculating the average expenses for one child per month in a municipal ECEC institution and is thus different in each municipality. In 2021, the average allowance was around €255.70, covering around 70 per cent of the actual costs.

In some municipalities, parents who choose to employ a nanny are entitled to a municipal allowance: the allowance is usually provided for children who are at least 18 months of age, until a place in a municipal ECEC institution is available. The allowance amount offered differs in each municipality. In 2021, only one-fifth of all municipalities provide such support, and the amounts vary from €78.63 per month in Iecava municipality to €254.79 per month in Carnikava municipality (both being relatively small municipalities). The allowance in Riga municipality in 2021 is €151.13.

### **3. Changes in policy since April 2020 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

As of 1 January 2021, all children with a disability will receive the family state benefit until they reach 20 years of age regardless of whether they continue to study (previously the benefit was paid until a child reached 15 years of age unless a child continued to study in high school or

vocational education in which case it continued until 20 years). In March 2021, the Ministry of Welfare introduced a proposal according to which the family state benefit will be raised. The proposal still needs to be discussed in the Parliament, and, if approved, the benefit will be as follows:

	Now	As of 1 January 2022
Families with one child	€ 11.38	€ 25
Families with two children	€ 44.14	€ 100
Families with three children	€ 134.28	€ 225
Families with four children	€ 234.35	€ 400
Families with five or more children	€ 234.35 + € 100.07 per fifth, sixth, etc. child	€ 400 + € 100 per fifth, six, etc. child

In 12 November 2020, the Constitutional Court of Latvia ruled that as of 1 June 2022, same-sex couples must be eligible for paid Paternity leave.

## **Policy responses to the Covid-19 pandemic to end April 2021**

### *Childcare and schools*

- Since 13 March 2020, all schools were closed, and teaching was organised remotely for all students. The school year ended as planned for all grades and was not prolonged. The final exams for 9th-grade students (last year of primary school) were cancelled. The final exams for 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students (last year of high school) took place as planned except for one final exam that was postponed from March to June.
- Since 13 March 2020, for a child to attend a preschool, the parent or other legal guardian was obliged to provide a written statement in which they confirm that neither parents nor a child: 1) has recently (within two weeks) been to countries listed as the COVID-19 risk countries (since 14 March 2020 – any country); 2) has been in contact with a person diagnosed with the COVID-19 (or anyone who has been in contact with a person diagnosed with the COVID-19) and 3) parents have no other childcare alternative than preschool. Since then, the work in preschools has been organised in combined groups with a maximum of 13 children per group. As of 31 March 2020, such a statement had to be provided once a week (before that – for every day when a child attended

preschool). Since 12 May 2020, the requirement to provide a statement was no longer active.

- Since 12 May 2020, preschool re-opened to parents who have no other childcare alternative; however, no written statement is needed, and parents were encouraged to evaluate the risks by themselves. Preschools were allowed to organise compulsory training in person for pre-schoolers who plan to enrol in primary education in September 2020 (six or five-year-old children). Upon parents request, the training is organised remotely.
- Since the new school year, which started in September 2020, for a relatively short period of time, according to the epidemiological situation in each municipality, only children whose parents were not able to work remotely were allowed to attend Kindergartens. At the moment, all Kindergartens are opened with an obligation to perform a COVID-19 test once a week for all personnel of the institution. In case of quarantine, the respective class must be closed, and no combined groups of children from different classes are allowed.
- Since the new school year, which started in September 2020, schools that are situated in municipalities with lower morbidity rates are allowed to organise teaching at the school premises for: (1) the 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 12<sup>th</sup> (last year) grade students in all cases; (2) 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in the form of rotation (morning and afternoon shifts, or even and odd days, etc.); (3) students from vocational schools if the in-site teaching is necessary for the vocational training. All the other students are attending schools only remotely. At the beginning of April 2021, 45 out of 119 municipalities were considered safe enough to perform schooling on the school premises (including outdoor only).

#### *Parental leave*

- A parent whose Parental benefit ended on 12 March 2020 or later was entitled to a benefit period extension up to 9th June 2020 if s/he was employed or self-employed and did not have any income and did not receive a lockdown allowance. The benefit was paid at the same amount but not more than €700 per month.
- The childcare allowance for a parent who receives the allowance for a child aged 18 to 24 months has increased from €42.69 to €171. The increased allowance was calculated and paid for the period from 12 March 2020 to 9 June 2020.

#### *Other measures for parents and other carers*

- Employers have been encouraged to organise remote work or provide flexible working hours to reduce physical contact. According to the Law on the activities of the state institutions during the emergency situation related to the COVID-19 infection,

state institutions were obliged to organise flexible working regime (remote work, shifts or use of other methods to reduce physical contact between employees). According to the COVID-19 infection spread management law (in force since 10 June 2020), state and municipal institutions work remotely only. The private sector organises their work as needed but are strictly encouraged to work remotely.

- Employers are entitled to salary subsidy for the period between 9 November 2020 to 30 June 2021. There are several additional criteria to receive this subsidy linked to the company's profit reduction, etc. The salary subsidy is 50 per cent of the average gross monthly salary received for the period of 1 August 2020 to 31 October 2020, up to a maximum of €500 per month. Employers who receive the subsidy must pay the difference between the subsidy received and the actual gross monthly salary to their employees;
- In the period between 12 March and 30 June 2020, employees (including self-employed) and employers were entitled to a 'lockdown allowance' paid to those who did not receive any income from their economic activity. There were several additional criteria to receive this allowance linked to the company's profit reduction, etc. 'Lockdown allowance' was 75 per cent of the average gross monthly salary in the six months before the first day of the emergency situation, up to a maximum of €700 per month. In micro-enterprises, the lockdown allowance was 50 per cent of the average gross monthly salary for the third and fourth quarter of 2019, up to a maximum of €700 per month. If a person is granted a personal income tax reduction for a child up to 24 years of age, an additional allowance is paid amounting €50 per month (for every child).
- During lockdown periods in 2020/2021, those who were not eligible to receive 'lockdown allowance' were entitled to 'lockdown support allowance', that is, €180 per month plus €50 for every child under the persons' care. Also, those who received the 'lockdown allowance' that was less than €180 per month were entitled to the 'lockdown support allowance'. The allowance amount, in this case, was the difference between the 'lockdown allowance' and €180.
- Employers and employees have also been entitled to the 'lockdown allowance' for the period of 9 November 2020 to 30 June 2021. As of 1 January 2021, the minimum allowance amount has risen from €330 to €500 per month with the ceiling of €1000 EUR if salary subsidy and 'lockdown allowance' are combined. In the case of micro-enterprises and self-employment, the 'lockdown allowance' is 50 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively, of the average gross monthly salary for the third quarter of 2020, up to a maximum of €1000 per month.
- Some municipalities organised warm lunches for elementary

school students living in poverty or families with three or more children. If the finances allocated to the municipality allowed, also for primary school students living in poverty or families with three or more children.

## **4. Uptake of leave**

Data on the uptake are from the State Social Insurance Agency, and the data on the average salaries are from the Central Statistical Bureau.

### **a. Maternity leave**

In 2020, 15,914 persons received the maternity benefit, which is around 4.3 per cent less than in 2019.

### **b. Paternity leave**

In 2020, 9,938 persons received the paternity benefit, which is around 7 per cent less than in 2019.

### **c. Parental leave**

The uptake of Parental leave during the last five years has almost doubled. Most of the parents taking this leave are women (83.3 per cent of the total number in 2020).

Most of the working parents who received parental benefits were men (82.4 per cent in 2016, 79.7 per cent in 2017, and 80.2 per cent in 2018).

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

No information is available.