

# Cyprus<sup>1</sup>

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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 for the first child, it is obligatory to take 11 weeks, including two weeks prior to the week of the expected birth and the rest following childbirth. 22 weeks for mothers who have a second child, and 26 weeks for the third and any subsequent child. It applies to mothers having a child by birth, adoption or surrogacy.

*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.
- Payments are not taxed.

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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 and voluntarily insured women who are expecting a child, have adopted a child up to 12 years of age, surrogate mothers or mothers who have got a child through surrogacy are entitled to Maternity leave.
- Persons who have a permit or the right to reside and work in Cyprus are entitled to the benefits irrespective of nationality.

### *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 additional 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.
- In the case of surrogate mothers, there is 14 weeks of leave starting two weeks before the expected week of confinement; and 18 weeks in the case of a woman getting a child through surrogacy.

## **b. Paternity leave**

### *Length of leave*

- 2 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.
- Payments are not taxed.

### *Flexibility in use*

- Paternity leave may be used across any two consecutive weeks up to two weeks after the end of the Maternity leave, 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 18 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 18 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 surrogate mothers and 18 weeks for mothers who have a child through a surrogate mother.

*Time off for the care of dependants*

- 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 dependant 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 to be carried out during working hours. They should give advance notice to their employers and provide a relevant doctor's note.

*Child birth grant*

- A lump sum of €548.82 per child is paid to the mother if her or her husband are insured for the birth of a live child or a stillbirth after a pregnancy of at least 28 weeks. The application for child birth grant has to be submitted within one year from the birth.

### *Special maternity benefit for unmarried mothers*

- A lump sum of €554.08 is paid to the mothers who are not entitled to the child birth grant. The application for the special maternity benefit has to be submitted within three months from the birth.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is six months, with well-paid leave lasting only 3.7 months. Attendance at ECEC is obligatory for children from the age of four years and eight months. There is a gap, therefore, of just 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.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on the cross-country comparisons page.

## **3. Changes in policy since April 2021 (including proposals currently under discussion)**

Maternity leave was extended from 18 weeks to 22 weeks for the second child and to 26 weeks for the third and any subsequent child. The period in which Paternity leave can be taken was extended.

A number of proposals are currently under discussion. The House committee has been discussing a draft proposal that would allow women to take additional Maternity leave without pay. Mothers would be able to extend their Maternity leave for up to 12 months without risking losing their job. For harmonization with the EU Directive 2019/1158 on the work-life balance for parents and carers, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has prepared a bill, *the 2022 Law Paternity, Parental, Care, Force Majeure Leave, and Flexible Work Arrangements for the work life balance*. This law will provide paid Parental leave that will initially cover a period of one and a half months, to be increased to two months from summer 2022.

## **4. Uptake of leave**

### **a. Maternity leave**

7,125 applications for Maternity leave were approved in 2021.

### **b. Paternity leave**

3,453 applications for Paternity leave were approved in 2021.

### **c. Parental leave**

238 applications for Parental leave were approved in 2021.