

Slovak Republic¹

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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 (*materská dovolenka*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave (before and after birth)

- 34 weeks: six to eight weeks of pre-natal leave; and 26 to 28 weeks of post-natal leave. Maternity leave cannot be shorter than 14 weeks and cannot end earlier than six weeks after giving birth.

Payment (applied for the whole period of Maternity leave) and funding

- 75 per cent of average earnings in the previous calendar year, when the employee had earnings and thus paid sickness insurance. The benefit has a ceiling of €1,732, i.e. 75 per cent of twice the national average wage from two years before. If the maternity benefit is lower than parental allowance (see 1c below), an additional payment is made to cover the difference.
- On top of the mother's maternity benefit, the father has the right to an additional maternity benefit of 28 weeks not transferable to the mother, 31 weeks if he is single and 37 if taking care of two or more children. Thus, taken together, the parents are eligible for 62 (or 68 or 80) weeks of maternity benefit. Although fathers are not eligible for Maternity leave, they can make use of the maternity benefit while being on Parental leave as they can claim the benefit when their child is between six weeks and three years of age. During this time, the mother may be in paid work or on Parental leave; however, she is not entitled to the Parental allowance. Both parents cannot

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receive maternity benefits for the same child at the same time. However, both parents may be on maternity benefits at the same time with different children, typically the mother with a new-born and the father with an older child.

- Payments are not taxed. During Maternity leave, pension contributions and health insurance contributions are paid by the state.
- The benefit is paid from sickness insurance contributions, collected by the Social Insurance Agency, and mandatory for all employees and self-employed. Employees contribute 1.4 per cent of their earnings, employers pay an additional 1.4 per cent of their employees' earnings. Self-employed workers pay 4.4 per cent of their declared earnings. Sickness insurance can also be paid on a voluntary basis.

Flexibility in use

- Leave typically starts six weeks, but can start as early as eight weeks before the expected date of birth, in such cases the post-natal period of leave is shortened accordingly.
- If the mother gives birth before the expected date, she can use the remainder of her pre-natal entitlement after giving birth.
- If the mother dies, the leave and benefit can be claimed by the father.
- Employed mothers and fathers are not allowed to continue their previous employment while on maternity benefits, neither full-time nor part-time. However, they can start new employment, either with a different employer or in a new position with the same employer.² The self-employed can continue working while on maternity benefits.

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

- To be eligible for the maternity benefit, a mother must have paid sickness insurance contributions for at least 270 days of the two years before giving birth. A father must have paid contributions at least 270 days of the two years before starting leave as well as be insured when starting leave. All employees pay sickness insurance contributions.
- The same conditions apply to the self-employed and voluntarily insured, however, the self-employed only pay sickness insurance contributions if their income was above €6,552 the previous year.
- There is no provision for same-sex couples to share leave. Under Slovak legislation same sex couples do not have the right to marriage, civil partnership or adoption of children.

² The Social Insurance Agency had been turning down fathers' applications for maternity benefits when they did not meet the condition of taking care of their child, due to paid work (pravnenoviny.sk (2019). *Ako dopadli žaloby otcov proti nepriznaniu dávky materské*. Available at: <https://www.pravnenoviny.sk/ako-dopadli-zaloby-otcov-proti-nepriznaniu-davky-materske>). However, new legislation has discontinued an obligation for mothers to formally transfer the care of their children into fathers' hands and should prevent the Agency from declining fathers' requests due to continuing paid work while in receipt of the maternity benefit (see also section 3).

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

- Maternity leave is extended to 37 weeks for single mothers and 43 weeks in the case of multiple births.
- In the case of a stillbirth, the mother is granted a maximum of 14 weeks of Maternity leave.
- If the child dies while the mother is on Maternity leave, the mother has the right to two more weeks of leave following the death of the child.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory entitlement. However, fathers are entitled to three years of Parental leave (see 1c) and to 28 weeks of maternity benefits not transferable to mothers (see 1a). Thus, in effect, fathers have access to individual 28 weeks of well-paid leave.

c. Parental leave (*rodičovská dovolenka*) (responsibility of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)

Length of leave

- Until the child reaches three years of age.
- Leave is an individual entitlement, both parents can be on Parental leave at the same time.

Payment and funding

- Parental allowance (*rodičovský príspevok*) of €383.3 per month is available to all parents who meet the eligibility conditions, whether they take Parental leave or not. It can only be claimed by one parent at a time and by a parent who previously received the maternity benefit. Parents who did not receive the maternity benefit are entitled to a parental allowance of €280 a month.
- The father has the right to 28 weeks of additional maternity benefit, 31 weeks if he is single and 37 if taking care of two or more children. So, although fathers are not eligible for Maternity leave, they can make use of the maternity benefit while being on Parental leave (see 1a).
- Payments are not taxed. The state pays pension and health insurance contributions for one stay-at-home parent taking care of a child until the age of six, when compulsory primary education begins.
- Parental allowance is funded from general taxation.

Flexibility in use

- Parents can agree with their employer on an extension of parental leave until their child reaches the age of five.
- Parents can work full-time or part-time while receiving the parental allowance.

- While both parents can take Parental leave at the same time, only one parent is entitled to the parental allowance at the same time, even with multiple young children present in the family. Parents are also not entitled to the parental allowance when one of them receives the maternity benefit, unless the maternity benefit is lower than the parental allowance. In that case, a lower parental benefit is paid, so that the total sum received by the parent is equal to the parental allowance.
- Parental leave can be repeatedly interrupted and restarted.

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

- Parents must be permanent or temporary residents of the Slovak Republic when claiming the parental allowance in order to be eligible.
- Parents' spouses are also eligible, if living in the same household.
- To be eligible for Parental leave, parents must be employed.
- Parental allowance is provided from the birth of the child, if parents are not eligible for the maternity benefit.
- Parental allowance is not provided to parents if another child of theirs has been removed from their personal care.

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

- Parental leave and parental allowance can be extended until the child reaches the age of six if it has a long-term health problem or disability, upon agreement with the employer, this can be extended until the child reaches the age of eight.
- Parental allowance is increased by 25 per cent per child in the case of multiple births.
- Parental allowance is reduced by 50 per cent for at least three months if any older child under parental responsibility is absent from compulsory education for at least three months.
- If the child dies while either parent is on Parental leave, the parent has the right to two more weeks of leave following the death of the child, though not beyond the day the child would have reached the age of one.
- If the parents separate, only one has the right to the parental allowance, even if both take care of the child.

d. Childcare leave or career breaks

No statutory entitlement.

e. Other employment-related measures

Adoption leave and pay

- Adoptive and foster parents are entitled to 28 weeks of Maternity leave and benefits (31 weeks for single parents, and 37 weeks for parents taking over care of at least two children). The leave can be used until the child reaches the age of three.
- Adoptive and foster parents also have the right to three years of Parental leave starting from the end of Maternity leave or the day when they take the child into their care, if the child is already older than three years of age. The leave can be used only until the child reaches the age of six. If the child is suffering from long-term health problems, Parental leave can last up to six years, but only until the child reaches the age of six. Parental allowance for adoptive and foster parents can be paid for a maximum of three years.

Time off for the care of dependants

- Employees can take leave to take care of a sick relative at home (*ošetrovanie člena rodiny*), including a sick child, or to take care of a child under the age of eleven (or 18 if the child is suffering from long-term health problems) for other reasons (e.g. if the child's school is closed). The length of leave is not limited. However, insured parents only receive an earnings-related benefit (*ošetrovné*) paid at 55 per cent of their previous daily earnings for a maximum of 14 calendar days. There is no limit to the number of episodes per year, if these do not exceed 14 days each.
- Insured parents are also entitled to a long-term benefit to care for a child in need of home care following a hospital stay or palliative care. The benefit amounts to 55 per cent of their previous daily earnings for a maximum of 90 calendar days and can be split between the parents.

Flexible working

- Pregnant women and women and men taking care of children below the age of 15 may ask their employer for shorter working hours. Employers may decline the request due to serious operational reasons.

Specific provision for (breast)feeding

- Mothers of children under the age of six months are entitled to two half-hour breaks for breastfeeding per child per full working day. Mothers of children aged between six and 12 months are entitled to one 30-minute breastfeeding break a day. Mothers working at least four hours a day have the right to one break a day per child until their child reaches six months. The break time is paid.

Other measures

- A childcare allowance (*Príspevok na starostlivosť o dieťa*) is available to cover some of the costs of childcare of children up to the age of three (or six in the case of a child with a long-term health problem or disability). It is

available to one of the parents, including adoptive and foster parents, if they work or are enrolled in secondary or tertiary education. Parents are not entitled to the childcare allowance if in receipt of the maternity benefit or the parental allowance at the same time for any child. The allowance is provided in three forms. An allowance of up to €80 per month is paid when childcare is provided by a kindergarten included in the official network of schools and school facilities. An allowance covering declared costs up to €280 per month is paid when childcare is provided by other official providers. Finally, an allowance of €41 is paid when childcare is provided by other persons or relatives.

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

The maximum period of post-natal leave is three years, 13 months paid at a high rate, the remainder at a low flat rate. Children are entitled to a place in kindergarten starting from the September after they reach the age of five, when attending kindergarten becomes compulsory.

For ECEC attendance levels, see 'relationship between leave and ECEC entitlements' on [cross-country comparisons](#) page.

There is a shortage of kindergarten places, and with priority being given to five-year-olds, many parents of younger children struggle to obtain a plac³. This shortage of kindergarten places may become more pronounced following the introduction of compulsory kindergarten for five-year-olds in September 2021. To address the shortage, construction of new kindergartens is underway, but the planned expansion (as of 2019) was insufficient even for five-year-olds, let alone younger children (ibid.).

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

Starting from May 2021, mothers no longer need to formally transfer care of their children into fathers' hands in order for fathers to start drawing on maternity benefits. The change was proposed by the SaS party (Freedom and Solidarity), a member of the governing coalition. The new rule is to increase fathers' access to maternity benefits even if they continue with paid work while being on leave⁴. The

³ Varsik, S. (2019) *Držím ti miesto. Komentár 2/2019*. Inštitút vzdelávacej politiky. Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/komentar-022019-drzim-ti-miesto/>

⁴ Trend.sk (2021). *V materskej pre otcov nastanú zmeny, chystáme aj ďalšie zlepšenia, tvrdí SaS*. Available at: <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/materskej-pre-otcov-nastanu-zmeny-chystame-aj-dalsie-zlepsenia-tvrdi-sas>

Social Insurance Agency had previously been declining fathers' claims to maternity benefits in such cases.

Compulsory kindergarten for five-year-olds, introduced by the previous ruling coalition of three parties, the populist SMER-SD (Direction – Social Democracy), SNS (Slovak National Party) and Most-Híd (inter-ethnic Slovak-Hungarian party), came into effect in September 2021.

Under the current ruling coalition of four parties, OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities), Sme Rodina (We Are Family), Za Ľudí (For the People) and SaS (Freedom and Solidarity), maternity benefit caps and parental allowance increased from January 2022. The maternity benefit cap was raised in line with legislation from €1,669 to €1,732. Parental allowance increased slightly, from €378 to €383 for parents who previously received the maternity benefit, and from €276 to €280 for those who did not.

Finally, legislation to introduce Paternity leave is due to be proposed by the government. Paternity leave of three weeks should be made available to fathers in the first six weeks following the birth of their child, starting in August 2022. However, the maternity benefit of 28 weeks currently available to fathers is expected to be shortened accordingly. It is planned that fathers would be entitled to 75 per cent of earnings in the previous calendar year, similar to maternity benefits. Fathers should be able to make use of the benefits while mothers are on Maternity leave or Parental leave. The proposal follows from an obligation to adopt EU Directive 2019/1158 on the work-life balance for parents and carers⁵.

4. Uptake of leave

a. Maternity leave

Nearly all eligible mothers take Maternity leave as it is obligatory. The number of fathers accessing maternity benefits had also been growing fast. A 2020 analysis of administrative data showed quickly rising uptake of maternity benefits by fathers. While in 2018 fathers of 10,000 children took leave, amounting to 17 per cent compared to the number of children born during this period, in the first half of 2019 already fathers of 6,500 children took leave, amounting to 24 per cent. Fathers took leave more often when they had higher income, when one or both parents had completed education or when they were self-employed.⁶

⁵ Kollárová, Z. (2021). Otcovská dovolenka bude. Krajniak a Matovič sa však sporia, kto to zaplatí. Available at: <https://e.dennikn.sk/2561178/otcovska-dovolenka-bude-krajniak-a-matovic-sa-vsak-sporia-kto-to-zaplati/>.

⁶ Dančíková, Z. (2020) *Ani muži nemôžu mať všetko. Komentár IFP 2020/06*. Available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/financie/institut-financnej-politiky/publikacie-ifp/komentare/komentare-z-roku-2020/6-ani-muzi-nemozu-mat-vsetko-materska-otcov-nastup-matiek-do-prace-jun-2020.html>

However, compared to mothers, fathers' leave-taking is still limited. In 2019, the most recent year for which data is available, 78 per cent of maternity benefits went to mothers and 22 per cent to fathers⁷. Regular official statistics on maternity benefits are only published on the number of monthly benefits paid and in a non-gender-disaggregated form. The most recent data shows that compared to 2019, 4 per cent fewer maternity benefits were paid out in 2020⁸. A 2022 report from the Ministry of Finance suggests the drop was mostly due to a fall in the number of fathers taking leave by a third compared to 2019⁹. However, the drop may have been linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Finance anticipates the number of fathers taking leave will start growing again and reach 2019 levels by 2025.

b. Paternity leave

No statutory leave entitlement.

c. Parental leave

There is no information available on Parental leave use. Parental allowance is paid to most families, unless they opt for the childcare allowance (see 1c). Data on the number of recipients of the Parental leave allowance is only available on a monthly basis. In February 2022, the most recent month for which data was available at the time of writing, the allowance was paid to 140,194 parents; 135,415 of whom were women (i.e., 97 per cent, similar to the figure reported the year before)¹⁰.

⁷ Istp.sk (2020) *Rastie dávka materské a aj počet jej poberateľov*. Available at: <https://www.istp.sk/clanok/15081/rastie-davka-materske-a-aj-pocet-jej-poberatelov>

⁸ Sociálna poisťovňa [Social Insurance Agency] *Priemerný mesačný počet vyplatených nemocenských dávok*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/soy9m9y>

⁹ Horváthová, V. and Salamonová, A. (2022). *Zima stále pod vplyvom pandémie*. Available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/files/archiv/4/Zima-stale-pod-vplyvom-pandemie.pdf>

¹⁰ Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny (UPSVaR) [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family] (2021). *Mesačná štatistika o počte poberateľov sociálnych dávok a dotácií a čerpaných finančných prostriedkoch*. Available at: https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/statistiky/socialne-veci-statistiky/2022/2022-socialne-davky.html?page_id=1157054