

**RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS IN
LEAVE POLICY IN
FRANCE**

2004 AND 2005 REFORMS

OBJECTIVES

- **Fostering gender equality at home**
- **Offering more options to parents who at the end of maternity leave face the tough choice between returning to work or staying at home with their children**

Ségolène Royal, Minister of Family and Childhood, September 2001

- **"It is essential that fathers learn to juggle their role as fathers as well as employees and that the companies they work for learn to accept this fact. The typically French practices of late night meetings and Saturdays in the office must be called into question."**

What Was at Stake?

- **A government under pressure: paying lip service to the Family Associations?**
- **Expressing concern over family issues**
- **...but complying with the principle of cost containment**

Setting the Economic and Political Context

- **Requirement of cost containment in the Welfare State**
- **Deficits in the Family Branch of Social Security (1.1 billion Euros in 2005)**
- **Unemployment rate: approximately 10 %**

**Changes introduced in 2004 and
2005: Significant Changes or
Piecemeal Measures?**

2004: EXTENDING PARENTAL LEAVE TO PARENTS WITH ONE CHILD

- **513 Euros per month if the parent does not work**
- **390 Euros if the parent works part-time (less or equal to half-time)**
- **295 Euros if the parent works between 50 and 80 per cent of full-time**

Tighter Restrictions on Eligibility

- **DURATION:** six months from the end maternity leave (or paternity leave); much shorter than for larger families (three years)
- **ELIGIBLE PARENTS:** those who have worked for at least two years preceding the birth (non-employed periods not included)
- **TAKE-UP RATE:** 20 per cent

2005: A NEW SCHEME FOR LARGE FAMILIES

- **750 Euros per month**
- **Duration: one year**
- **Eligibility: parents that give birth to a third child**

PROGRESS AND PITFALLS

- **2004 Scheme: parents lacking a stable job or unemployed before the birth are excluded**
- **The amount of the benefit is too low: provides no incentive for fathers**
- **Persistence of the gender division in domestic labour**
- **HOWEVER:**
- **Parental leave is shorter**
- **For large families, the amount is higher**
- **More flexible: recipients can work part-time**

Parental Leave and Child Rearing Benefit: 2 different schemes

- **PARENTAL LEAVE:**
- **Component of employment legislation**
 - **Unpaid**
- **CHILD REARING BENEFIT:**
 - **Allowance paid by Social Security**

Breakdown of Childcare Arrangements for Children under 3

