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7th International Leave Policies & Research Seminar

# **The Swiss parental leave scheme**

## **Current situation and future developments**

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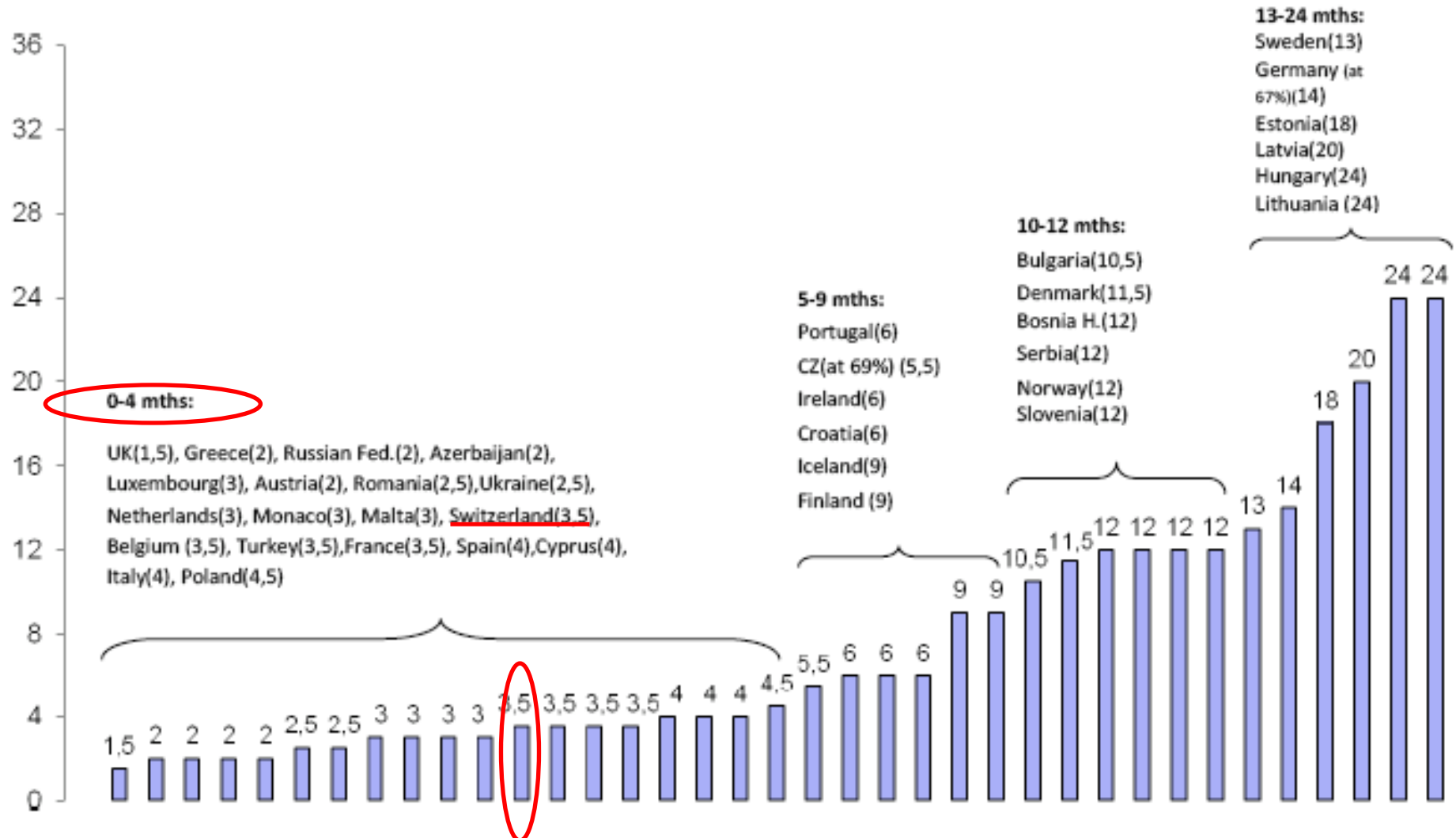
# 1. Statutory parental leave policies

- Maternity leave
  - 98 days
  - 80% of earnings (ceiling EUR 63000)
  - Starts at delivery (not flexible)
  - Eligibility criteria
- Federal law on loss-of-income (2005)
  - 60 years of struggle
  - 4 leave schemes rejected in national vote
  - Agreement on a minimal scheme

- No statutory paternity leave
  - > minimum of 1 day-off (private law)
- No statutory parental and adoption leave
- Time off to care for dependent children
  - 3 days per illness event (paid)
- Time off to care for dependent elderly family members
  - 3 days per year (unpaid)

- Switzerland's leave model:  
« short leave part-time mother policy model »  
(Wall, 2007)
  - The leave is centered on the mother
  - Modified male breadwinner model
  - Care work is assigned to the family & labour market
  - Gender equality is low on the political agenda

# Total post-natal well-paid (>70% earnings) leave (months)



Source: Wall, K., Pappamikaail, L., Leitao, M., & Marinho, S. (2009), p. 41

## 2. Special leave entitlements

- Cantonal entitlements : Geneva
- Civil servants of cantonal administrations
  - A majority of cantons grant extended maternity, paternity and parental leaves
  - A minority of cantons grant paid adoption leaves
- Private sector : a minority provides extended paternity and parental leaves

### 3. Recent political claims

- 1984: 9 months unpaid parental leave
  - > massively rejected in national vote (Aebi et al., 1994)
- Parliamentary interventions (N=27)
- Policy type:
  - parental leave and paternity leave are equally high on the agenda
  - Majority since 2006
  - Majority in favour of paid leaves for all wage workers

- Political actors:
  - various parties take interest (maj. Green)
  - Appropriation of the issue
- Arguments:
  - positive
  - negative



- Leave schemes (1999-2009):
  - 3 proposals: 1 or 2 weeks of parental or paternity leave at 80 or 100% of salary
  - 4 proposals: from 6 to 8 weeks of parental or paternity leave at 80% of salary
  - 1 proposal -> 4 weeks of unpaid paternity leave
  
  - A minority of the parliament supports leaves
  - The federal council is opposed
  - > leaves are NOT a political priority

## 4. Explanations for Switzerland's limited leave scheme (Martin, 2002)

- European Union's (lack of) influence
- Neo-institutional theories
  - Direct democracy
  - Federalist state
  - Political composition
- Role of representations
  - Representations of parenthood
  - Perceived benefits from parental leave schemes

## 5. Future developments

- No legislative change
  - > **inequalities persist among employment sectors**
- Possible legislative changes
  - Unpaid paternity/parental leave
  - > **inequalities among social classes**
  - Cantonal parental/paternity leave
  - > **inequalities among regions**

# Thank you for your attention

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