Comparing Leave Systems in the Nordic Countries

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Content

• Introduction and history
• Length of leave
• Level of benefit
• Take-up of leave by mothers and fathers
In the Nordic countries, the reconciliation of paid employment and family life has been supported by the welfare state since 1960’s. This may be one secret behind the high fertility rates.

Fathers were first given rights to parental leave in 1970’s. During the past two decades, fathers have been in the focus: father’s quotas have been introduced to the leave schemes and campaigns designed to encourage fathers to take more leave.

In principle, the leave legislation is based on an idea of shared childcare responsibility, as well as (almost) equal capability of both parents to take care of a child.

In all countries, the employment rate of women is high and full-time employment is common. Still, the take-up of leave is not equally divided between mothers and fathers: mothers use majority of leave days.

The unequal sharing of parental leave has negative consequences for women’s position in the labour market as well as men’s position in the family, especially in case of parental separation.
History of parental leave schemes in the Nordic countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternity leave</th>
<th>Paternity leave</th>
<th>Parental leave</th>
<th>Father’s quota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1997-2002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*introduced again in the industrial sector in 2007
Length of parental leave
(income-related benefit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Both Parents</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Length of paternity leave
(weeks; taken after birth when the mother is at home)
Length of childcare-related leave
(income-related + flat-rate benefit)

- Norway: 37 months
- Finland: 37 months
- Sweden: 18 months
- Iceland: 10 months
- Denmark: 10 months

- Flat-rate
- Father
- Both parents
- Mother
## Level of benefit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Iceland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maternity leave</td>
<td>100 %*</td>
<td>70-90 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
<td>80-100 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paternity leave</td>
<td>100 %*</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0 %**</td>
<td>80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parental leave</td>
<td>100 %*</td>
<td>70-75 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
<td>80-100 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's quota</td>
<td>100 %*</td>
<td>70-75 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
<td>80-100 %</td>
<td>80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child care leave /flat-rate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>314 €***</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3307 NOK (407 €)</td>
<td>3000 SEK (344 €)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* with a ceiling (93 € per day or 490 € per week); full pay according to coll. agreements
** agreed in individual or collective agreements
*** + means-tested supplement max 168 € + 60-94 € for siblings under school age
Mothers’ share of parental leave use

Source: Nososco
Mothers’ parental leave use

Mothers use longer leave if:

• 1st child
• Older, work experience, can ”afford long leave period”
• Low/middle income
• Public sector
• Large employer
• Extra benefit from employer
Fathers’ share of parental leave use

Source: Nososco
Fathers’ parental leave use

Fathers use longer leave if....

- 1st child
- Legislation facilitates, fathers’ quota
- Public sector, female dominated work place
- Other fathers use leave at work
- Extra benefit from employer
- Middle/high income, but not above ceiling(?)
- High education of mother and father
To sum up:

• Considerable variations between the Nordic countries in leave policy
• Variations in leave use among mothers and fathers but also similar patterns
• Hard to compare statistics because of differences in policy and in presenting statistics
• Need of more collaboration for cross-country comparisons!
Impact of fathers’ parental leave use on the relative risk of a second birth

Source: Duvander Lappegard, Andersson, Journal of European Social Policy, 2010
Danish parents’ leave days

Accumulated parental leave days during child’s birthyear and following year

Source: www.statistikbanken.dk
Finnish parental leave use

• Parental leave benefit per day: Mothers: 49,7 Euro, Fathers 69,9 Euro in 2008

• Fathers on leave are more often employed in technical, science, art, humanities, health and social work

• Fathers on leave are less often employed in administration and commercial work and self-employed

• Most used in Åland and least in Laponia

Source: The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (www.kela.fi)
Iceland, average days per parent on parental leave

Source: Childbirth Leave Fund (faedingarorlof.is)
Norwegian fathers leave days
Distribution of days during first 6 months 2000-2009

Source: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (www.nav.no)
Swedish parents who share leave equally
Defined as 40-60% division

Source: Swedish social Insurance Agency (www.forsakringskassan.se)
Fathers’ share of parental leave use

Source: Nososco